Through many Windows

HELEN WOODWARD

LIBRARY
OF
FREDERICK
AND
JULIA
HINTON

Through Many Windows

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BY

HELEN WOODWARD

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Through Many Windows

CHAPTER I

I Am Fired

I WAS discharged from my first job at the end of one week for incompetence. The five dollars a little furrier paid me for keeping a set of single-entry books was not his only loss—it was necessary to buy new account books and ledgers, for I had made of his old ones a mere mess of blots.

It was a black day for me. I had a contempt for business and disliked it—considered myself superior to it—yet here in one week I was defeated by one of its most insignificant jobs.

I thought myself a failure because of the distorted ideas that had been pounded into me in schools. There it had been held that enthusiasm, exactness, and hard work are needed to make money. They are not. They sometimes help to hold a job. They have nothing to do with making money. But it took me a long time to find that out. I did not know it then. I had given the job both hard work and enthusiasm—and yet had failed. I was without exactness, so I must always fail.

A startled dismay arose in my heart. It seemed

that my business career was at an end, that I should never be able to make a living. But it turned out to be not so bad. The failure leveled a mountain of conceit, forced me into channels of effort more profitable than keeping a set of books, and more in harmony with the tenor of my mind.

I was entirely unprepared for earning a living. My family were working people and poor. My mother is German, my father Polish. We had that clean, hard, cold poverty that has been associated in the sentimental novel with German immigrants. Our home life was kindly, unemotional and self-abnegating. Enormous sacrifices were made that I might remain at school as long as possible. My own pride and vanity and the necessity of my family made a business success compulsory for me.

As children we had few toys or books. My father's hard-earned money was needed for food, decent clothes, and good air and sunlight. But when I was twelve I heard that children of thirteen were permitted to take books from the Webster Free Public Library at 76th Street and the East River, only a few blocks from where we lived.

Promptly on my thirteenth birthday I walked down, trembling with excitement, to the Library. It was a musty bright place with a kind man of

thirty or so behind the counter. To me he looked venerable. He said, "Would you like a book?"

"Yes," replied the embarrassed little girl, without a "please."

"What sort of book? What have you read?" He was attending to me as to something important. I took this as a matter of course, because I thought that all people connected with books were superhuman in character and in learning.

"Oh, books by Horatio Alger, and *With Stanley in Africa*, and once I read some plays by a man named Hugo." I did not tell him about the first pages of the Laura Jean Libbey stories which I had read on the sly. They were put into our letter box to lure us on to buying the complete tale. And I never have from that day to this seen more than the first page of one of them.

"Do you read the newspapers?"

"Yes, sir."

"What part of the papers do you like to read?"

"About politics mostly."

It was the terrible truth. Long and slowly and painfully through years I had to unlearn my belief in the importance of political news and events. But I was not such an unnatural child as you may think. My father had played a part in labor-union affairs and had helped to win for Henry

George the only district he ever carried in New York City.

The man behind the counter did not smile. Gravely he handed me a large, thick and comfortable-looking book. Oh, kind and wise man behind the counter of the little old Webster Library in 1895! The book he gave me was *Nicholas Nickleby*. I walked home on that cold day, with my head buried in the book, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. And then for six years I lived with my head buried in some book or other, seeing nothing and hearing nothing beyond its covers.

Eagerly I consumed Dickens and Scott, Stevenson, Thackeray and George Eliot, as well as Dumas and Hugo and Daudet and other Frenchmen. My inquisitive mind, prompted by a few lessons in the public school, had led me to learn French—and I could read it very well.

I also read much on economics and politics. I recall Demarest Lloyd's remarkable book on the Standard Oil Company, which has passed to undeserved oblivion. Of course, I read much trash. Poetry I missed, perhaps because of the dreary stuff poured into us in the class-room. I do not have many vivid memories of actual events during those six years, but I remember brightly when

"Kim" appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* and when *Looking Backward* first burst on me.

Soon after that important Webster Library day, we had moved to Boston, where we lived for five years. There I had gone to the Girls' Latin School, a free public school, which specialized in the classics, as a preparation for college. I could not go to college, so the course at the Latin School, although very thorough, was without much practical value to me.

My preparation for earning a living was a little knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, mathematics, and literature.

Certainly I gave no early indication of fitness for the advertising business—that is, if noticing and remembering advertising signs is an indication of anything. Neither did I at that time give any indication of the ability to sell which developed later. This combined lack I proved one summer vacation when I was about fifteen and tried to earn money by selling tickets for some entertainment. A tired week at it sold not a single card. My complete lack of conviction and "faith in my product" doomed me to failure.

One day I walked down Boylston Street in Boston and went from shop to shop, timidly offering the wretched things. Among other places I went into a men's furnishing store and asked to

see Mr. Earl. "We have no Mr. Earl," the man said, with casual indifference.

"But you must have." I thought him very queer, because I had seen the name in the window.

"We never heard of a Mr. Earl." He was a little cross.

"But his name is in your window," I insisted, much bewildered.

"Where?" He too was surprised.

Whereupon I led a procession of clerks to the street and pointed to a sign reading "Earl and Wilson Collars."

Three years later we moved back to New York. My father had a friend, a small wholesale furrier, who gave me that job as a bookkeeper.

I was so ignorant of the ways of the world that when on the first day in the bookkeeping job, I went to Childs' for lunch, I was petrified with fear and did not know what to order. I finally ate ice cream and lemonade.

One week of confusion, effort, crossings out, and futility—and I was out of a job. I knew no one else in New York well-to-do enough to hire help. So for nine months I looked for work.

A certain quickness of mind and a streak of common sense were my assets, but I did not realize them at that time. Nearly all of my natural aptitude was hidden by wrong training.

And whatever my qualifications were, they were neither seen nor wanted by the people to whom I applied for a job through the nine months which followed my failure as a bookkeeper.

I had no idea how to go about getting work, or how to talk to business men. I remember telling a cloak and suit manufacturer that I could read Latin! This sounds too grotesque to be true—but I took so seriously what I had learned at school that I really thought a business man would be proud to have in his office some one who knew a little Latin—this, though I had detested reading Cæsar and Virgil.

Schools do not intend to distort reality. Many teachers naïvely believe that certain qualities of character are important for the making of money—qualities like Honor, Courage, Knowledge, Steadfastness. These are undeniably fine qualities. Business also talks of these same abstractions, but it knows that fortunes are founded on a much cheaper set of mental activities, that may be expressed in one axiom—"Keep your eye on the dollar and get it."

I shall never get over those nine leaden months. Nothing else in my life has held such horror as this going from door to door, office to office, and employment agency to employment agency, to ask for a job. All I wanted to do was to work, and yet I

was placed in the position of a beggar. Nobody was actively unkind anywhere, but everybody was indifferent. I felt so shabby, so dull, so homely, but above all so hideously humiliated.

Day after day, and week after week, I answered advertisements in the "want" columns. You send your pleas for work off to P.B., Box #49, *New York Times*—something dim in the dark. . . . Day after day—and day after day no reply comes—until you have a sense of fighting the intangible, of battling with a mist.

And right now—six days a week—thousands of people—not so young or so healthy as I was then—still hear remarks like these:

"You're too late."

"Thank you. We'll let you know."

"No, we must have a man; a girl won't do."

"No, you must be older"—or younger, or taller, or shorter.

"Oh, are you Jewish? Well, of course, I have no feeling about it, but some of our customers ——"

"Oh, you're not Jewish? I'm afraid there isn't any opening."

"Will you please write us a letter, giving your qualifications?"

"We'll file your card and let you know."

(This the veteran job seeker knows to be a polite turn down.)

Only once did I hear of a proud job hunter who answered this remark properly: "Please don't. Be good enough to tear up my card now, instead of after I get on the elevator."

On the other hand, when these same indifferent people asked me what I could do I made the answer most maddening to the employer looking for help, "I can do anything." This vague answer meant that I was eager to try to do anything.

"Can you typewrite?"

"No."

"Are you a bookkeeper?"

"No."

"Well, what can you do?"

"Oh, I can write correct English, I know French, and I have a good head for figures. And I learn quickly."

I was indeed quick at learning. But that could hardly be proved in advance.

I had nothing definite for sale. I did not at that time know even that refuge for the desperate and the untrained—addressing envelopes for an imitation living.

No department store would consider me for wrapping bundles or selling behind a counter, al-

though it has since then turned out that I am able to sell things rather well, and enjoy the effort of selling. All this was hidden by my outer covering. I did not know how to dress. I did have healthy red cheeks and was very neat. But I wore heavily rimmed glasses, was small, frightened, and shy, and had lost all self-confidence; so I gave the impression at once of incompetence.

There was nobody to give me a little advice, for my father was an impractical man with a naïve faith in education and books. I had always been a reserved, hot-tempered, impatient child, who picked her own way through everything. My family considered me a model of intelligence.

Looking back I cannot understand how a girl of nineteen failed to know that in order to get a job one must have something to sell. Other girls as badly prepared get work sometimes through friends in publishing or teaching circles. The scholastic, literary, and business worlds are full of people carried incompetently from job to job, never making good, never at ease, always on sufferance. There are whole families like that, fathers and children and cousins and aunts. But I had no influential friends. So I stuttered and trembled and begged for nine long months, trying to get some one to let me work eight or nine or

ten hours a day at nearly anything—for five dollars a week.

Every little while despair would drown me and I would stay at home for a week—never leaving the house during that time and finding refuge in the morphia of books from the humiliations of a bewildering life.

Across the stale boredom of those nine months there flashed one incident that began in excitement and ended in angry disillusion. One morning in the rows of empty Help Wanted ads, I came across one asking for an assistant librarian —"No experience necessary"—at the Maimonides Library on the east side of Central Park. All this was before the day of the big united New York Public Library, which later swallowed all these smaller private free libraries.

I grabbed my hat and coat and flew out of the house, without glancing at a mirror. I did not have sense enough ever to look in the mirror in those days. Few women, thank goodness, are so silly.

The librarian seemed very old and school-teacherish. She was probably about thirty-five—an old maid rather brown in tint and sharp. She evidently found my unbecoming clothes, neatness, and large glasses entirely satisfactory. Anyway, she hired me in five minutes. In ten a joyous

small person was installed behind the main book counter, dealing out books and advice to all comers.

"What is a good new novel?" was the commonest question. And in the days of *David Harum*, *The Little Minister* and *Kim* this was easy enough to answer, according to whether the asker was a woman, a man, or just a person. But most of the questions and demands for advice came from young people and children. I had already then a passion for trying to improve people. This should have warned me that I would some day go into the advertising business. Graciously I advised a small boy to read Charles Carleton Coffin, or *Treasure Island;* or with a bristling patriotism I warned another from the pro-English pages of G. A. Henty. It had been a perfect day, when with a shining face, I reported to the librarian at five o'clock. Swift was my fall.

"You won't do," she said, drily. "I'll pay you for the day."

"But—but"—I knew my lips were trembling and I said no more for fear of bursting into tears. Finally rage gave me courage. Rage is the most effective producer of courage in the world. "I haven't made any mistakes. What *have* I done?"

"You don't ask enough questions," she answered. "You take too much on yourself. I'm

running this place." And walked off. And as I went home I told myself: "There's your terrible old conceit again. You think you know it all and you'll never get on. Everybody will always hate you." And so on and so on . . . the same old bitter self-reproaches that young people—and old ones, too—have enjoyed from the beginning of things.

But mixed with my self-hatred a shred of common sense told me that the work had been well done and that the woman had been afraid of my natural fitness for it. She seemed to know nothing of books; perhaps she was a poor relative of one of the rich supporters of the library, and in desperate need of this job, for which she had no aptitude. This aspect of working for a living, which no one had ever mentioned at school, filled me with despair. It was the first glimpse I had ever had of the jealousy of inferior executives.

People who know their own business well are not hard to work for. The real expert may be a severe taskmaster, demanding superior work and too much work, and often giving too little pay; but he is never unreasonable. Those who are uncertain of their own steps are tyrannical, oversensitive and fault-finding. And working for an unreasonable employer is worse than working for a mean one or a stingy one.

After these two failures and much more futile searching for a job, it was finally borne even into my unpracticed mind that some definite business requirement must be learned in order to get a job. It had to be something that could be learned quickly and without expense, as I had no money to pay for any special training. I had already made a mess of bookkeeping. So I taught myself stenography and typewriting. David Copperfield's efforts to learn shorthand by himself were amusing and pathetic. Mine seemed merely a bore. The shorthand systems used in those days were much more complicated than the ones in use now. It was an extremely painful affair for the family who night after night had to dictate sentences far sillier than "My aunt's best bureau is in the kind neighbor's garden." Still I cannot understand why anybody who can spell and punctuate and write a correct sentence needs to go to a school to learn stenography.

As soon as I could typewrite with a little facility I went to the employment department of the Remington Typewriter Company and tried to get a job. These employment departments are maintained by the large typewriter manufacturers to get positions for operators of their own machines. The service is free, and I went daily to this sad place for weeks. Those in charge were cold and

unsympathetic, as they are at any place where people who are looking for employment are gathered.

It was a place gray with fear and shame. Looking for a job is one of Hell's choicest samples on earth. People out of a job are always ashamed. And they are afraid with a terrible fear. Most of the people in our big cities have lived through this fear and this shame. How can they read with patience in the daily papers such stories as one which appeared recently, a story of two young men—the sons of famous financiers—who have gone to work at the bottom in an Albany Department Store, for wages like any other clerks! The man who wrote that story for the newspapers, the editors who passed it, the typesetters who put it in type most of the millions who read it—know that these boys will never learn anything about a real working life because they will never have that terrible fear of being penniless—that slinking terror of facing those who—apparently so calm and contented—sit behind a desk. To the boy or girl looking for a first job, the worried people in offices or factories doing a day's work or drawing a week's small pay, look powerful and secure.

Many earnest women have played the part of the poor working girl for a month—six months. But they never can get the reality—always at the

back of the mind must be the thought that in case of failure there is a comfortable refuge. The feeling of loneliness, of being a little thing in a huge antagonistic world—can hardly be deliberately acquired. And they don't have to bear the petty rasping discomforts. I remember a pair of shoes. They were rather tight. But they had cost five dollars and I had to wear them. Months of nervous misery came from that trifling mistake.

I know now that there are many jobs for typists who are not fully trained as stenographers. I have employed dozens myself. Why I couldn't get one I can't imagine, for I tried in every way, besides sitting fuming in the office of the typewriter company. I answered and inserted advertisements, when even the money for postage was hard to squeeze out; I visited every place where there seemed the least promise; I tried to get every kind of job except domestic service. But for nine months nothing came.

CHAPTER II

I Work for Nothing

AT LAST a chance came to work for nothing. I thought it was opportunity opening the door a crack, and I slipped in.

The Remington Typewriter people sent me to an office at 150 Nassau Street, the American Tract Society Building, one of the oldest large office buildings in New York. On one of the upper floors I entered a bare room that contained four flat desks and no human soul. From a small inner office out popped a queer-looking figure. Her face was bitten and creviced with lines. Her irascible blue eyes blazed icily under gray bushy bobbed hair.

She all but leaped on me. "Did you see our advertisement?" she demanded in a harsh voice with a Southern accent. She was excitedly ingratiating.

"No, the Remington Typewriter people sent me."

"Can you typewrite?"

"Oh yes."

"Have you any experience?" Dread question.

It had closed a hundred doors to me, and left the Remington Company itself helpless before my inexperienced fate. I wondered then how people got experience. I found out afterward that they usually did it by lying. A convenient relative or friend was willing to certify that said stenographer had worked for him efficiently for the requisite year or two.

Her answer was sweet to my ears.

"Well, that doesn't matter here. When you get through with this place you'll be able to hold any job anywhere. There's a demand to-day that simply can't be filled. Look at this ——"

Dramatically she threw open the innocent-looking side compartment of one of the desks. Out leaped a graphophone, equipped with the tube-like wax cylinder that was in use before the invention of flat disks. "This is the great business invention of the future," she rushed on. "The day of the stenographer is over forever. I know. I was the very first woman stenographer in this town. You wouldn't believe it, but I started real young. And it was a hard fight—indeed it was. They thought I was a kind of freak, but I just fought through. There's something in blue blood. And when a Johnston of Virginia condescends to get into the struggle in New York, blood will tell. We know how to fight, we Virginians. Ask any-

body to-day what they think of Alladair Johnston. They'll tell you! There never has been anybody like me in this town. The girls nowadays are no 'count. They never think of a thing except men and powder and they just can't do a real day's work to save their souls." Many a time afterward I heard this till it became like the chorus from "The Trojan Women"—it was said with as much tragic fire each time.

"But you look as though I could teach you. You'll learn this in no time and then you'll be earning twenty-five dollars a week as easy as —"

I looked at her in dazed silence. The flood of words shrilled on:

"And I'll tell you what I'll do just to make things go faster for you. I'll teach you myself. And I won't charge you a penny for it. I don't come from Virginia for nothing."

I had always been fascinated by the idea of new inventions. They seemed American and patriotic. And this idea of using a graphophone instead of the stupid shorthand filled me with delight. It took about an hour to master the thing and a few days to practice the writing of letters and legal documents which Miss Johnston considered necessary. I was hypnotized by the idea of learning to write correct legal documents on the typewriter. I don't know why stenograph-

ers in those days believed that the best jobs were in lawyers' offices, because they were not then and are not now. The work of a legal stenographer has to be painfully accurate, and the opportunities for getting on are few. Often the stenographer in a law office does most of the work of a law clerk and even of a studious lawyer, without either the title or the money for the job. Deluded, I spent a good deal of time in that office practicing on legal papers. Miss Johnston herself approached them with awe. I have never had a job in any lawyer's office—and with my persistent inaccuracy would, I am sure, have made a mess of one.

At the end of two weeks I found myself working six hard days a week for nothing. It came about naturally enough, and I do not think the addled woman who was my terror and despair meant anything unjust. The office was a sort of branch of a big phonograph company, one of whose officials, a white-haired man with a soft Southern voice and a red nose, came in about once a week to look us over. Miss Johnston had almost no money to run the little place. It was remote from the main office, and, as far as I could make out, was a stepchild in the affections of the company, tended casually by that one elderly gentleman, who was also a First Family of Virginia and who wanted

his fellow Virginian aristocrat to have a job. So Miss Johnston probably had no money to hire help. I was glad enough to acquire "experience." This is how it all slid into being, that I was holding a job worth about fifty dollars a week and doing it at first for nothing. Later I got five dollars a week through a characteristic business muddle.

On the same floor in the building there was a firm of court reporters. These men would spend the morning and part of the afternoon in the various courts, taking down testimony in shorthand. Their notes had to be transcribed at once so that the attorneys next morning could glance at them before the case was resumed. Formerly these court stenographers had dashed back to their offices and redictated their notes as fast as they could speak to four or five stenographers. No one girl could possibly do all the typing in time. Even so, lawyers and stenographers had sometimes worked all night. To them the dictating machine had been a godsend. One day one of their girls was ill. The chief court reporter nervously begged us to help him out by transcribing some of the cylinders. Miss Johnston was explosively pleased. Here was a chance to make a little money. "It's marvelous practice for you—marvelous, marvelous!"

The cylinders with their hidden speech were brought in. Miss Johnston, feeling that she had done a good day's work by pumping up my enthusiasm, flew out on one of her numerous excursions. I sat at the typewriter, intense, absorbed. There were about ten foolscap pages of testimony —"Question and Answer"—which were difficult to handle mechanically, as any typist will tell you. The subject was uninteresting. Torts, demurrers, bailee, sub judice, and other legal phrases flew in clear speech from the little tubes at my ears. I was as frightened as an actress for the first time before the footlights. At last it was done. I looked it over carefully. There seemed to be not a single mistake.

A girl who has typewritten thousands of words for practice becomes all thumbs when she does her first real job. The carbon paper refuses to slide smoothly into the machine. Somehow or other all the paper gets thumb-marked; somehow or other the margin won't come right, she can't get the date in the proper place. All this nervous confusion passes quickly enough. It means merely that for a day or so she will be a little slow. I have had stenographers of many jobs and many years' practice whose first day's work in a new job was a disheartening mess of mistakes.

But I enjoyed my own stage fright. It was dramatic and interesting.

It was then with a good deal of satisfaction that I looked over the finished long sheets of legal words. But none the less I could feel my heart beat as I showed them to Miss Johnston when she returned. And here came a revelation. At first she was delighted with the copy. And then, suddenly she screamed a piercing shriek. I jumped from my seat. "My God! My God! How can anyone be such a fool? How can anyone? Oh, what a life I lead! I have to do everything myself—everything—no one can do one single thing without my standing over their shoulders every single minute. What would my father in Virginia say if he could see me now? Have you no sense? Oh, I'll go crazy with this office! All night long I lie and worry and all day I work to keep it going. And you do a thing like this."

I was aghast. Never in my life had I seen anyone in such a fury. Out of her ravings broke the dreadful truth—the whole job had been ruined because I had used a purple typewriter ribbon. And legal documents were valueless unless they were in black, which was then rarely used for any other typing.

"Why didn't you tell me that? How was I to know?" But she only raged the more. Why

should she tell me? It never occurred to her as possible that there was a human soul in the world who didn't know that legal documents were always written in black ink.

All this time I was getting nothing at all for my work. And in addition to this typing I had come gradually to answering the telephone, teaching new girls how to operate the graphophone, writing her few letters, and generally taking care of the office. I was so angry at her unreason that she saw she might lose me; so she calmed down, apologized, and said that beginning the following Monday she would pay me five dollars a week.

Joy! Oh, joy! What did I care about a tantrum or two? I was actually going to earn some money. Actually! And I knew in advance I could do the work. She could rave and scream, but I was able to contribute three dollars and a half to the expenses at home, pay my own carfare, and on one or two gala days a week I could go to Childs' and spend fifteen cents for a luncheon of buckwheat cakes and cocoanut pie. This was a delicious change from the package of sandwiches I usually brought with me from home. That it was indigestible meant nothing to me then.

New clothes were out of the question. I had no active interest in my own appearance; it seemed to me hopelessly bad and I thought that

nothing could be done to make it better. But I suffered much from the ugly combinations of color which I had to wear because of miscellaneous skirts and coats left over from schoolgirl days. I remember with shrinking a dress of sage green which I had to wear for a year with a red-and-black woolly jacket. Ugly little jackets they were at best, with a silly flare at the waist. For a hat, I bought a wire frame for fifteen cents, draped a left-over piece of black broadcloth on it, and fastened a cheap rose at the side. This hat I wore every day for two winters. Other girls do this sort of thing and look very well. I just hadn't the knack.

What in the wide world would I have done if I hadn't had a home to live in? The cheapest boarding house I knew was a semi-religious one on East 17th Street and Stuyvesant Square. I had a friend who earned six dollars a week and who boarded there for either two dollars and a half or three dollars and a half a week. She always looked starved and she ate ravenously, poor girl, when she visited us. And when I occasionally ate there with her, the food was feeble and mean.

But luckily there was a home and good food. And five dollars a week was rolling in. To earn that five dollars I did, as far as I can remember, the following things:

Transcribed testimony every day for the court reporters.

Typewrote endless circular letters to prospective buyers of the graphophone.

Opened the office each morning.

Interviewed all girls who called and trained all those who stayed to learn. This meant hours each day of dictating all kinds of business and legal forms into the graphophone.

Explained the machine to callers.

Went out to the offices of those who might buy the machine and showed them how it worked.

In other words, I sold the graphophone.

And I bore the incredibly bad temper of my employer. I would open the office at nine o'clock, work busily all day. At four in the afternoon, or sometimes at five, she would come flying in, for the first time that day, usually a hysterical tornado looking for some one or something to abuse. I was both convenient and useful for this purpose. In spite of all this I loved the work, and had a glorious time doing it. In making people buy the contraption and in teaching girls to operate it I had a childish delight. I enjoyed every detail of it . . . even, verily . . . answering the telephone!

But after I went to bed at night I cried myself to sleep with mortification and rage over the insults which that wretched woman had piled on

me during the day. It was important that I should keep the job. . . . I fully believed it was the only one in the world for me.

Yet every morning I arose joyously and tackled the day again. It thrilled me to put the key in the lock at nine in the morning, or as near nine as I could make it; I must say that I was usually late. It has been an incorrigible habit of mine never to be on time in the morning at any job from the first day I started in business until I left the whole thing for good. Anyway, the sense of owning the place as the key turned in the lock was worth more than money. I opened all the desks and scattered papers around so that the office should have a busy look to prospective buyers. Then I got out my newspaper and put a wax cylinder on one of the recording machines. Into this I dictated column after column from the tiresome legal advertisements and notices in the morning paper. Also letters from books of business forms. This was for the benefit of the girls who were learning to operate the machine. These girls would drift in . . . very few of them . . . rarely more than two at any time. Miss Johnston promised them jobs when they were trained. And at first I innocently did so, too. But there were almost no machines sold and there were no jobs. The machines at that time were too crude, and

when one was sold it usually was set aside to gather dust after it had been tried for a week. Here and there, to my later good fortune, some firms did use them. To-day these dictating machines, much improved, are successful.

Among the girls whom we were teaching to use the thing there was a Mrs. Morrow, a gentle, rather sweet woman of about forty-five. She stuck there day after day, painfully trying to learn the work and bearing Miss Johnston's abuse. She was a widow and had to earn a living. Eventually she set out in a wily way to try to get my job . . . this sweet motherly person. But why not? Her situation was desperate. The need for a little money, a little food, a dress to cover one has often caused people before my eyes to do things so humiliating, so ugly . . . people who really were decent enough. How can any clear-eyed person bear to face a future for this world that continues this horrible slimy groping for just enough to eat and wear? Surely any disaster is worth risking if it might bring about the end of such grime in human souls. Mrs. Morrow eventually got my job, and now I'm glad she did.

Well, one day after I had trained a girl and taught something to Mrs. Morrow (I was soon speaking with the voice of authority on all business typing), I went out to call on a firm of

lawyers. They had expressed a faint interest in the device, and Miss Johnston had promptly shipped them a machine on trial. My job was to demonstrate it to them, but I sold them three that morning.

So I went back in glory and ate my sandwiches and took a walk in the streets about Park Row. I was excited by everything I saw. But I was mortified by my clothes. So I soon went back to the office and read a book until the end of my lunch hour.

At four Miss Johnston blew in. She was sunny with pleasure at my sale. But that was rare. Nearly every day she would raspingly demand the letters I had written; hat and coat still on, she would rush to her desk, her sharp blue eyes hopefully searching for a mistake. She always found something. A misplaced semicolon would throw her into almost maniacal fury and despair.

Before I closed the office at five-thirty, however, she was velvet to me always. "You know, honey, the iceman didn't come, and there was a man supposed to deliver curtains from Altman's and I waited in for him all day. And the house was such a mess. I just had to clean it up. That no 'count nigger that's supposed to come once a week never showed up this week at all. Don't it beat all that I, Alladair Johnston, should have

to do the things that slaves did for my grandfather. No wonder my temper gives out. I just wasn't brought up to it."

And I really think she hadn't been. Most of the girls of her kind who did any work in the South at that time did it behind closed blinds, and hid it like a black disgrace. She was a violently professional Southerner. And it was for the same reason that people are always professional Southerners or professional Englishmen or professional patriots. She had nothing else for pride to fall back upon. She had worked really hard as a stenographer, but her day was over and she was in a backwash, depending on old family friends in Virginia to make jobs for her. She was really a pitiably tragic figure; but to me she was a devil. She did not hate me at all. She just had to act that way to all subordinates.

I wish I could give you an impression of that woman's hands. Somehow, while her big sharp eyes and gray short hair and rasping voice stay in my mind, it is her hands that I see most . . . rather like claws bent with a touch of rheumatism and continuously in motion. The almost physical sensation of their continual handling of my most delicate and secret feelings makes me shudder at her now, more than anything else she ever did. God knows I was a prig where men were concerned,

but she was even full of jealous fear lest I should flirt with some man who came into the place.

One day she had one of her queer out-of-date notions. She decided that the office was not getting enough outside typing to support it. "When I was a public stenographer in New York, do you know how I got my work?" she demanded. "I wrote a beautiful announcement in red ink on white satin and put it up in the building and it brought me so much work that I couldn't do it all." She insisted on buying a quarter yard of white satin, cut it into letter-size pieces, and gave me a notice to type on it in red ink. What a horror the white and red object became to me!

Ask any typist what it would mean to type a model piece of work on white satin in red ink, keeping it free from smudges and without error, since no erasures could be made. And imagine doing it with a gorgon standing over one's shoulder. She stamped and screeched when I spoiled the first piece. But finally by agonized self-control and the slowest work . . . I hate to work slowly . . . I finished the unspeakable thing. She framed and put it in the elevator, and it brought not one customer or even one remark of any kind from anybody. It took me two whole days to do that job.

From the beginning she had been promising to

raise my pay to eight dollars a week. At Christmas time, after eight months of torture, she did it. Also she gave me two books for Christmas. It was not on the cards that I should read them or that I should draw the eight dollars even for one week. Exhausted by this effort at kindness, she stormed into the office the day after Christmas in a more violent rage than usual. Perhaps there had been too much celebration. Anyway, with one sweeping, furious movement she flung my letters across the room—only the wall stopped their flying into Park Row. Then she demanded that I pick them up and give them back to her. With great enthusiasm I told her that I would do nothing of the kind.

Whereupon she informed me that all my faults and insolence and carelessness and ingratitude were due to the regrettable fact that I was a Jew. She did not mean this—it was just a new and simple method of abuse. Like all Jews, I prefer to do such abusing of the race as I choose for myself. So I resigned the job. I returned the next day and handed her back her Christmas books. She was sorry; she begged me to change my mind. But I was through. Though there seemed nothing but failure ahead, I would have died rather than go back to work for her.

This tale sounds bleak, but in an easy, normal way all these troubles slowly vanished. I do not know how it is with most people, but I seem always forced to grope through some sort of hell before I can find a peaceful haven of any kind.

CHAPTER III

Literature by the Pound

WELL then, there I was—out of a job. But this time it was not so bad. And indeed it never was bad for me in that way again. We had done some typing for a small advertising business in the same building. In five minutes I got a job with Samuel Jaros, its owner. He already had one stenographer in that small office. She was about fifty . . . slow and dull. She was also finicking and fussy, altogether very trying to a man who worked with great speed and who had to dictate booklets, letters, and advertisements. Mr. Jaros was evidently training me to take her place. By this time I had played enough with stenography to be able to take dictation. I could turn out about three times as much work in a day as she, and could write letters without dictation, which she could not learn to do. She was the most pitiable thing in the business world . . . a woman without ability or friends, who had started to work at forty—another Mrs. Morrow, but with no guile. At the end of six weeks Mr. Jaros said to me one day,

"I can't do it. I had intended to put you in Mrs. Baker's place, but if I let her go she'll never get another job. She'd be on my mind all the time. You're young and it won't matter to you. Take a week and find another job."

I was embarrassed. Here was somebody trying to do me a favor. "Thank you—I'd better leave this Saturday. I've only been here a few weeks. You're awfully kind."

It was a heavy Saturday and Sunday and Monday. Was I once more to go through that gray boredom, that feeling of being dead which comes of failure?

But no. Though I did not know it, this was over for me forever. Never again would I be so lost. Like so many good things in life, good fortune peeped at me first in a heavy disguise.

On Tuesday morning there was an advertisement in the Want columns of the *Herald* for a typist to operate a graphophone. It was the first advertisement of the kind I had ever seen—probably the first that ever had appeared. I hurried downtown at once. The address was 11 East 16th Street, a queer, shabby building. My two jobs had been in the mountainous, business-like structures of the Wall Street section, and this down-at-heels remodeled loft building frightened me. Dreadful stories of girls kidnapped and attacked

sprang to my mind, and I dared not go in. I walked back to Fifth Avenue twice before finally, in desperation, I entered the unpromising elevator.

I almost did not go in at all. Yet through that cluttered and dirty doorway I was to meet people who were to be my friends for many years . . . to find a pleasant way to make a living . . . and even indirectly, though not in that place, to meet my husband. From the day I entered that elevator the anguish of hunting a job was over.

However, all that was around the corner. At the moment I was still in the elevator, which landed me in a large loft, broken up into offices by partitions made of packing cases. The largest room was filled with long rough board tables on trestles, each surrounded by twenty girls, who were addressing envelopes, folding circulars, and stamping letters with swift concentration. Not one looked up. At one end of the room at a shabby roll-top desk sat a blond woman . . . short and determined of body, with a fresh-colored cold face and vivid blue eyes. Her head and face were square. Her body was rectangular. Her motions were abrupt and at right angles. She looked as though she had been cut squarely out of a block of stone. She motioned me autocratically to her desk.

"What do you want?" she snapped.

I managed to get out a timid reply, "I am answering this advertisement."

"Can you operate a graphophone? I suppose not. Nobody else who has applied for the job so far has ever even seen one. *I* haven't time to teach you."

"I have operated one for eight months," I said with triumphant joy.

"All right. You'll get eight dollars a week. You'll take dictation for the assistant advertising manager, Mr. Metzger. My name is Miss Craddock. Take off your hat and get busy."

No questions about experience or references.

She put me at one of the board tables with a typewriter before me, in that clattering noisy room. A stranger in our far-famed efficient business world would naturally expect that some one would now sit down for five minutes and tell me what kind of firm this was, what it sold, what was the object of the department, and what exactly I was supposed to do. Innocent idea! Only twice in my experience has such a simple and time-saving explanation been made to me. Usually the new employe is tossed down at a desk and left there to flounder. A kind neighbor will sometimes try to point out the details of the job. As to the purpose of the organization as a whole, the general import and policy of the business, that is

something you pick up for yourself as you go along if you have enough initiative and curiosity. I have known minor employes to work in large establishments for months without ever having a clear idea of the nature of the enterprise.

Even with my restless curiosity I had trouble enough learning what I was about, because Miss Craddock savagely forbade all talking in her department; and she herself received questions with annoyance.

Piles of stationery were laid before me. To my bewilderment, some were department store letterheads and some *Merrill & Baker*. Was I working for one of the well-known department stores? Surely not. At my side was a graphophone, and a stand of wax cylinders marked with the fine lines which showed that they held words. I put one on the machine and set the hearing tubes in my ears. "Merrill & Baker letterhead," it began, crisply. "Mr. James Montgomery, Columbus, Ohio. Dear Sir: Your letter about a set of Ridpath's History of the World has been referred to us. We have just discovered in our stockroom a set of this History, very slightly damaged, which you may have at a greatly reduced price. You will understand, of course, that the set is complete in every way; nothing is missing and the damage is so

slight that you would not perceive it if we had not called it to your attention. In any event, the set can be sent subject to your approval. If it is not in good enough condition you can return it." Etc., etc.

There were some fifty of these letters, some about sets of Dickens, some about a "Complete Shakespeare," some about the works of Sir Walter Scott. Occasionally one read a little differently, but the idea was the same in all. I wondered how there happened to be so many damaged sets, whether there had been a fire or a flood. Later in the day I met the man who belonged to the voice in the machine . . . George P. Metzger, almost as new to the publishing and advertising business as myself. He was as glad to answer questions as I was to ask them, and he cleared up much of my bewilderment. I was told that Merrill & Baker was a subscription-book concern, engaged in selling sets of books—mainly high-priced editions of well-known authors—by mail and through canvassers.

The inside history of Merrill & Baker would make a story by itself. I did not know it until years later, long after I had left them and long after the firm itself had disappeared.

But now I am struggling at my rough pine table with the mysteries of these many damaged sets . . . of classic authors . . . of a mysterious

Mr. Clark, who occasionally passes through . . . of vague men and women who pop in from nowhere at all.

I was in a wilderness of people.

Slowly it all came to me. I learned that although the house sold Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, Shakespeare, and so on, their chief business was with the sale of Ridpath's History of the World, a heavy-handed work to be found in American homes from the rocky coast of Maine to the Golden Gate . . . to say nothing of those of England and Australia. It was at that time the only well-known history of the world and its sale kept up until H. G. Wells's *Outline of History,* and Van Loon's *Story of Mankind* like keen wind, blew away stuffy historical stupidities.

Merrill & Baker sold thousands of Ridpath's History and of the standard authors through big department stores all over the United States. Whole pages of advertising appeared nearly every Sunday in the *Herald* and *Times* and *Journal* and *World,* in all the Philadelphia papers, and each month in the magazines, offering these books for "short time" sales, with threats of a raise in price. These sales were always arranged through a device we called a "club." "You can join the Ridpath Club" . . . *not,* "You can buy Ridpath's History." How young and innocent both we and

our public of 1903 would seem to an American advertising man of to-day!

The prices asked for these subscription sets were fantastic. They had showy bindings. Often the illustrations, type, and paper were good, but the prices were always from three to twenty times what they should have been. There were sets of Shakespeare, for instance, which sold for a thousand dollars. The cheapest sets were about five dollars a volume.

There was a hard and fast contract with the Wanamaker stores, forbidding the cutting of prices on these books. Wanamaker's made only a small profit, but Merrill & Baker made a net profit of fifty per cent on each sale and could afford to sell the books more cheaply. One day Mr. Metzger had a bright idea. He wrote a letter to a man who had refused to buy a set of Thackeray at the high price, and told him there was a mythical damaged set on hand, which he could have at fourteen dollars less than the "regular" price. The man bought. And that is how I got my job. There were so many "damaged" sets that it required one girl's whole time to write the letters. And I was the girl.

Later the letters were printed and mailed by the hundreds of thousands. The house of John Wanamaker protested angrily and frequently, but

without result, and eventually this was one of the grievances that broke up the Wanamaker connection.

The damaged-set idea itself was enthusiastically imitated by other sellers of books on the installment plan. Five years later one firm was offering "sixty-eight" damaged sets of Abbott's *Makers of History* for sale month after month in magazines having millions of subscribers. Never, as far as I know, did one single letter come in asking how it was that a man could afford to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising to get a total cash return of $1,564. The magazines which printed the offer gradually set up a higher standard for their advertising pages; the whole installment book business grew more dignified, and the selling of damaged sets went into a dusty desuetude.

Strange letters wandered in from our advertising. One day at Merrill & Baker's a letter came to my desk from the North Carolina mountains. It read: "I am sending you twenty-five cents for a sample of your Shakespeare. I have suffered for years with a misery in my back and I think maybe your Shakespeare will do it good." This came from a section of the country where the natives are supposed to speak in the purest Elizabethan English.

Occasionally we would get into a long corres-

pondence with a madman. We had an elaborate thirty-six page booklet describing Ridpath's History. One man who received it promptly sent back the booklet copied word for word in red ink. And he ordered a set of the books and paid cash for them. Months afterward there came from him an enormous package of manuscript. It proved to be a copy of the first part of the History, again word for word, and again in red ink.

It may seem strange that to a young idealistic girl this damaged-set pretense did not seem shocking, but the game was enthralling. The personalties were interesting. The heads of departments under whom I worked were direct and frank and looked on the books, their public, and themselves as a sort of joke. Anything that had to do with the selling of books charmed me, so that I accepted it all with little criticism. I became sharply critical of such methods only after I began to lose interest in the game. This is not a nice confession, but—like diplomats and newspaper men—business men are often blinded by the fascination and necessities of their jobs. Without question there is a real excitement and interest in the mere game of business to many people. With some it lasts a lifetime. With me, as it happened, it wore itself out. The last few years were just work, with the thought of money always before me.

I had a good time working for Merrill & Baker. To a girl whose only dolls had been the characters in Dickens and Jane Austen, to a girl who had gone to sleep every night making up further adventures for the people who had walked out unhappily from the last pages of *Vanity Fair*, who in her idle hours gave Rebecca to the Knight Templar in true melodramatic fashion—to such a girl there was sheer delight and joy even in transcribing circular letters about Dickens or Dumas.

In a few days it occurred to me that time was being wasted in the dictating of these letters. I could make them up for myself. So I abandoned the dictating machine forever. Soon I was handling this mail all by myself. This is the way most stenographers get hold of better work, naturally and step by step.

CHAPTER IV

Long John Silver

I HAD been working at the new job about a week, curious and excited about everything, when one day Miss Craddock came up to me.

"You have seen Mr. Clark here, haven't you?" she said. "Well, he would like to try you out as his stenographer."

Of course I had seen Mr. Clark. He was the manager of the mail-order department, and the most important person in our little domain. Tall, lazy, a New Englander, he dominated the place, although he passed through only occasionally. He had the kind of homely face that women like, heavily marked by worry or pain. But his blue eyes were jolly and his laugh was ready. He spoke with a tired drawl.

I went into his office with my notebook in my hand, trembling partly with excitement and partly with the fear of failure. His office was little better than the cluttered outer one—a tiny corner, shut off by rough partitions, and containing a scratched roll-top yellow desk and two chairs. It had one device which fascinated me—a little door

in the partition, about twelve inches square. Mr. Clark could reach it easily from his chair, pull it open, and without physical effort talk to his assistant. He was a lazy man.

On that first day J. C. (so the office called him) dictated a letter to his brother in New Zealand, which later I typed into five closely spaced pages. At the end he added a postscript: "I have not written to you for a long time because this is the first time I have had a stenographer who could take dictation properly."

The pencil fell from my hand and I looked at him in amazement. "How do you know?" I demanded.

He smiled. "Oh, I can tell by your manner."

He would not have been so sure if he could have seen me, tossing wide-awake half the night, trying to remember what he had said. Half the letter he received was in his own words. The other half I made up as I went along, from phrases heard and remembered. Mr. Clark was satisfied. At least he said nothing, and after that he dictated to me essays on my beloved authors, which were later made into exquisite booklets to sell the sets at fantastic prices. They were really essays of distinction.

Only once in the next year and a half did he make a criticism of my work. He said one

day, "If I were to present you with a nice big box of commas, I wonder what you'd do with them."

He had bad business judgment and a gambler's instinct. He was annoyed and irritated by business. An essayist and humorist of talent, he had to make a living by advertising, for an expensive wife and three costly little girls. He escaped from life through an elaborate game, which he played with a few close friends.

They all loved Stevenson and they lived a sort of boyhood dream of Treasure Island. Together they owned a sailboat which they called the *Hispaniola*—a survival of the old days of cutter racing between this country and England. They bought her because J. C., as usual good-humored and a little arbitrary, demanded a boat on which four could sleep, but which must not cost more than five hundred dollars. What they really bought was a kind of hull, only eight feet wide, with something called four berths, and the most wonderful collection of leaks that were ever embodied in a single craft.

On board the *Hispaniola* J. C. Clark became Long John Silver. Ray Brown, then an artist and now a well-known advertising man, was called Jim Hawkins, the Boy, because of a sunny disposition and an indomitable joyousness. Harry Leon Wilson, then editor of *Puck*, was Old Tom

Morgan. Kirke La Shelle, the theatrical manager, was Israel Hands.

It was a very joyous party they had on the old *Hispaniola*, but it could hardly have been a comfortable one. She was so rotten that none of them dared jump on her deck from a dock, for fear of going through her. She was so covered with old paint scales that she tore all the cuticle from their elbows, hands and knees. On the ways she looked like a melon seed on edge, so deep and so narrow. She had a tender that might have been her own grandmother for age. Once when they were loading for a cruise at City Island a careless and slightly bibulous dockhand tried to lower a three-foot package of canned goods from the dock to the boat. The knot slipped and the canned goods went right through the bottom of the boat. Twice they calked her from the inside when she was in the very act of sinking. Sometimes it got so bad that they could see the green sunlit water right through her sides.

J. C. was sailing master and cook; he was the best sailor and had a delicate digestion. He would not eat the messes that his friends pried out of a saucepan.

The fifth man was Malcolm Davis. He did not have a single name from *Treasure Island*, but a whole sentence. They spoke to him and

of him always as "you, George Merry, with your eyes the color of lemon peel this minute by the clock."

With what gusto they played their game! They carried it into their offices and wrote one another business letters, called one another on the phone, and invented elaborate jokes all around their Treasure Island dream. I believe that poker-playing was the nearest thing to real piracy on the *Hispaniola.* But they had many good shipwrecks and much colorful cruising on the high seas. Round and fierce were the pirate oaths which they brought back, and which served Mr. Clark at the office in his impatient tempers. For a week or so I was both amazed and horrified at this swearing. After that it made no further impression on me. It is no doubt a sign of the dangerous temptations in the path of the nice young girl that later on I found it impossible to do business without swearing on my own part. It was easier to swear than to get a headache from suppressed annoyance, and it was fairer to say a few damns than to take it out on one's secretary.

But the job with Merrill & Baker was by no means all amusement. Again a tyrannical woman made life hard. This time it was Miss Craddock, who had hired me. Although I worked for the two men, I was under her disciplinary supervision.

Miss Craddock and I had had many minor disputes,—one arose because I refused to pick up a pin,—but one day we had a quarrel that shook all our little world. I had an occasional idle hour, when I either read or got up new ideas for circular letters. She ordered me (she always ordered, never requested) to address envelopes in my spare time. I really tried to obey her, having a preposterous idea of what I owed to the beneficent people who were paying me eight dollars a week. But at the end of half a day of addressing envelopes I thought I should go mad. I went up to Miss Craddock, really trembling with fear —afraid of her and even more afraid of losing my precious job.

"Miss Craddock, won't you give me something else to do?"

"I have nothing else for you to do."

"But I can't go on with the envelopes."

"Why not? Are you better than any of the other girls?"

"I don't know, Miss Craddock, but I just can't do one single one more."

"Oh yes, you can. And moreover you will!"

But I didn't. Miss Craddock was furious, and I had to go to Mr. Clark, who saved me by removing me permanently from her authority.

Yet it was only one week after this when Miss

Craddock bullied Mr. Clark into getting me a raise of salary of two dollars a week. And from that time on she tried always to be kind to me in her short, sharp way. Her actions seemed to fall continually into clearly separated divisions. She seemed to be two different people. She was either harsh and tyrannical, or she was exceptionally generous and kind—though in a self-conscious and uneasy manner.

Anatole France might have been speaking of Miss Craddock when he said: "*C'est une femme impitoyable, dure envers elle-même, dure envers les autres. Il la faut plaindre. Elle est en proie à la plus cruelle des divinités: à la chasteté.*"

It is cruel to ask young girls to work for a woman who is a slave to that particular goddess. Such a woman cannot understand people under her, is jealous of them if they are pretty, is shocked by a little rouge and powder, is often irascible and tyrannical. Most employers seem to have no idea of the misery they impose on their employees by putting them in the power of a woman who secretly hates them.

Such women are not always harsh or unkind. I know one who is always gentle and quiet, and, I believe, fair, but she is depressed and unhappy and her department looks drab and dull. There

are not many pretty, bright faces in it. It is a sad place.

Miss Craddock had a strongly maternal disposition, with all the tyrannical desire to mold and consume which goes with it. And she was capable of the self-sacrifice by which the mother soul is likely to make slaves of other people. Yet it was possible for her to scold with fury over some slight error on the part of a pathetic little girl and to reduce half her department to tears about once a week. Unlike Miss Johnston, she did not use abusive language. Her speech was that of a prim lady. It was rather her manner—a manner so cold, so fierce, that the girls would shrink in terror. This is not an exaggeration. I have seen minor exhibitions of this kind in other offices, but I have not seen anywhere else such fear of the boss as these girls felt for Miss Craddock. Even the men who employed her, from Mr. Merrill down, were afraid of her.

When her system had been cleared by such a burst of rage she was likely to be kind for the rest of the week. She tried never to discharge girls who were especially poor, and fought hard for raises in pay for them. Later we had a new bookkeeper, whom she never insulted at all, a gentle and lovely girl from Nova Scotia. Eunice Johns was a little deaf, was innocent and intelligent, and

quietly won a respect for which I had to fight. As for me, Miss Craddock was sincerely afraid that my rapid rise (I was getting two dollars more a week) would turn my head. She took that responsibility seriously and did her best for me. Once I was a guest in her house in the country. For the good of my soul she made me get up at five in the morning and walk three miles to a Presbyterian church—though she knew I was a Jew who never went to any religious service whatever, Jewish or Christian. Eunice and I were there that day and Eunice played the organ. The rest of the day Miss Craddock made really delightful for us. The woods were fresh and young, and we searched about and gathered quantities of trailing arbutus, the May flower of New England.

It was such a pity about Miss Craddock, because she was naturally a high-minded woman. A keen employer, swift of eye and judgment, her harsh, consuming energy got every possible ounce of work out of the hundreds of girls who sat in tense fear in that room of rough chairs and rougher tables. She was perhaps the most honest person I have ever known. But most people who are conspicuously honest are not subtle. A little subtlety might have brought some happiness for Miss Craddock herself and for her employees.

While I feel contempt and disgust for Alladair Johnston who put me through eight dreadful months, I have only feelings of kindness toward Miss Craddock. In my mind she stands out clean and straight, whereas the other woman brings thoughts of unswept corners.

Under Miss Craddock's sharp eye, our advertising department was pugnaciously virtuous—while elsewhere in the same office there were drunkenness and debauchery and seductions. People made love there without license and without rite. All this I was too inexperienced to see. Not one bit of it did I understand. Years later I was told. There was a plump woman, respectably corseted, older than most of the girls, who was the mistress of one of the executives. She offered her favors freely to other men in the place, and one day was caught by her recognized lover . . . or should I say employer? . . . in a very compromising situation with a shipping clerk. She lost both her jobs. I saw and spoke to her every day and I thought her a competent, stupid sort of good stenographer. Her respectability I never doubted for a moment. She didn't have dyed hair or painted cheeks or loud clothes. I thought they always did. Several years later I met her on Lenox Avenue, rolling a baby carriage. She was still fat and domestic,

but now she had been married and so had a right to be both.

So much nonsense has been written of the dangers and temptations to young girls in business offices. Girls find temptations when and where they are ready for them, in offices or out of them. I was wide-awake and intelligent, but I knew nothing of these goings-on. And there were dozens of other girls there of whom the same was true. Offices are like small towns. All kinds of things happen in all of them. Some of the inhabitants take part and some don't. Some know about them and some don't.

Much at Merrill & Baker's was tawdry, much was muddled, much was sly—but it all had a gusto and speed that threw it into the land of farce-comedy.

CHAPTER V

Small Town New York

IN the daytime I lived vividly in the rough-and-ready offices of Merrill & Baker. In this stirring world I was getting a new impression every minute. I had a restless, eager curiosity about business and its ways.

But I was a sort of intellectual prude, I suppose. I began to be afraid of losing contact with the higher learning. So I dragged myself, after a hurried dinner, to the free evening high schools. These began their courses much too early for me. In order to attend them I had to rush home, eat quickly, and dash out at once to school. I found that, with my little training, I knew more of literature than the teachers. And as concrete business entered my mind, the luminous abstract poetry of the higher mathematics which I had loved became suddenly incomprehensible. In the days when I had been just a schoolgirl time did not matter, and while the classes plodded along I was able to amuse myself by reading surreptitiously. These later evening hours were precious and the slow movement of a class made me fidgety. So I gave that up and read . . . and read . . . and read.

It was natural enough that I should select subjects as remote as possible from the day's work. By accident I came upon and read Thomas Watson's *History of France*. I remember it as a lively and well-written book. The later actions of Mr. Watson, who seemed to be a little unbalanced when he became Senator from Georgia, make it probable that the judgments of his history are wrong. I haven't seen the book in years, and it may stand rereading. Anyway I owe it thanks. It opened up to me a wide field of adventure in the story of the French Revolution. Voltaire's acid and Rousseau's emotionalism were a perfect combination for my mind at twenty-one.

I read everything I could find about France in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Arthur Young's *Travels*, for instance. How simple and terrible that book is! This enlightened Englishman, journeying here and there in France before the Revolution, had no eyes for palaces and parks and châteaux. He saw only the common people and their way of living—peasants who lived on roots and who were "black with hunger and dirt."

But from Arthur Young one could turn to the pointed nonsense of Beaumarchais, or to the scholarship of Taine's *Ancien Régime*. I have not read a page of Taine in at least fifteen years, but when I think of his *Ancien Régime* even now I am

astonished at his ability to compress so many facts —and such curious facts—into a book which is as readable as it is profound.

For a year I lived in the French Revolution; then I dropped it all one day and have never approached that period again.

About this time my sister and I began to go to the theater. This was the day of Richard Mansfield, and you could get a ticket for fifty cents. I remember a distant relative, a stranger, formal and correct, who came from South America on a visit and took us to see Lulu Glaser in a musical comedy. This was the first time we had ever sat in orchestra seats. We wore our only evening dresses . . . hers of blue crêpe, mine of green. Afterward he took us to Rector's for supper. We were much afraid of doing the wrong thing, and so were uneasy all evening. We enjoyed it afterward.

My sister and brother lived in a lively social world, but I did not fit into it. Most of the girls they knew joined little clubs of young people. And they organized dances and card parties and such gayeties, which were held in small hired halls. There were no chaperons and none were needed. How prim these little clubs would seem to-day! But somehow the girls, who looked on these clubs as matrimonial agencies, found in them their way

in life, and that way led away from offices and into marriage. For the young men . . . well, it doesn't matter what they thought or why they joined the clubs (often to escort their sisters and find them beaux) . . . but before long they found themselves somehow or other married to the girl members.

Then there would be an engagement party, a linen shower, and a festive wedding for all the young people and their parents. There was always much gathering about the piano on Sunday evening in some girl's home, and loud singing. Sometimes, particularly among Jews, there was good music. Usually one person could play or sing fairly well. Modern psychologists could have told us that that sort of loud amateur singing coincides with repressed sexual impulses. These young people were virtuous—at least the girls were. And we knew that the boys kept their philanderings for other company. Even then I could see that good music was the expression of a sexual impulse. And this amateur singing, wasn't it a bit like the calling of a bird? . . . We all found such satisfaction that way. And in yodeling in canoes or in country lanes . . . And the moon called for more singing than the sun.

The boys were nearly all traveling salesmen. Like many young Jews, they had not been trained to do any special work. Some of them were good

salesmen and some were not. They all later went into other work; some had little wholesale factories of their own; some became insurance agents. They read the newspapers closely, and an occasional magazine or book. They were bright and intelligent, but not at all intellectual. The last trip on the road, a prize-fight, the boss's peculiarities—these were the things they talked about. The girls, who were nearly all stenographers or bookkeepers, had two vivid interests—getting a husband and clothes.

On these Sunday evenings when they did not sing they usually played poker for small stakes. Altogether they were good-natured, kindly, and boisterous. There was usually a babble of conversation, joshing, jokes, and often a heated argument in which everybody talked at once. Out of the jumble some voice would arise louder than the rest:

"Oh, you socialists, you make me sick. Just nothing but a lot of people holding jobs and making money out of you. A lot of loud noise. Wasting your votes."

Another answered, red faced. "Sure, go on and vote for some old Democrat or Republican. Crooks! Be a slave all your life if you want to!"

And the first voice would come back: "Sure I'm going to vote the Republican ticket. Flanders

anyway has got enough sense to make a decent success out of life. Look at all the money he's made. He can afford to be honest. I don't trust any of 'em, but at least give me a man that's got so much money that he doesn't need to make any out of us."

"Aw, can it!" some bored young man would call out. "Say, listen! You can talk about this till to-morrow morning—but supper's ready and I'm starved. I hope there's enough to eat. An elephant or so would just suit me."

And they would all troop in to the delicatessen supper.

These people formed, in effect, a kind of small town or village. I do not mean that they always lived near one another, in the same house or on the same street, but all their interests ran together. Some had lived all their lives in New York, and their circles were the young people who had grown up on the same "block" (veritably the same village), or they were the children of foreigners who all had come from the same neighborhood in Prussia or Poland or Roumania, or they were groups who had met in some office or at church. New York City is composed of innumerable villages like this—each quite separate from its physical neighbors. No family in our apartment house belonged to our village.

The young people in our community seldom went to the theater. In summer they would have little picnics at Manhattan Beach (the beach itself was then quiet and inexpensive and the swimming wonderful). And sometimes a group of boys would hire a launch for the day, the girls would bring a luncheon, and they would spend the day on Long Island Sound or on the Hudson. This was more ambitious and had to wait until the boys and girls were earning about twenty-five dollars a week.

I had no part in this busy world. I never went to any of these parties. If they happened in my own home, I set the table and gladly went out to buy the supper at the delicatessen store. I liked that part of it. A delicatessen store on a busy Sunday evening in New York is a pleasant place, bright and cozy, and all the customers seem to have a party spirit. Smiling jolly things to eat lie piled on the counter. It was dull to go to such a feast and choose food for one or two people. It was just an errand to buy a few slices of corned beef and a roll or two. But I felt hospitable and rich when I shopped for twelve hungry young people, innocent of metabolic consciousness. Then I expressed myself in *sardellen* and frankfurters, and brown loaves of rye bread

with caraway seeds, and smoked sturgeon and potato salad and piccalilly.

I liked to come home laden with bags and packages—to my sister's disapproval. She thought it undignified to carry bundles on Sunday. And it was fun to set a large table, white and gleaming, with flowered dishes and silver, and to arrange a center of fruit and autumn leaves, or trail long strings of vine leaves on the white cloth.

But otherwise these parties made me feel stupid —one of the most exhausting sensations in the world.

I had too intense an inner life of my own. That life, being so intense and so hidden, gave me many false ideas. One was that I was homely, awkward, and not likable. Slight remarks like this, heard in childhood:

"What lovely curly hair Dolly has! Such a pity Helen's is straight!"

"Well, thank goodness, *Lenchen* is very smart. She doesn't need to be as pretty as Dolly."

"What an awful temper you've got! . . . Why don't you smile and be jolly?"

These occasional words, which I never repeated to anybody, developed in me a bitter self-consciousness. From this I found relief in books and in my feeling of mental superiority. I knew too

much that came from books, and too little that came from life. The other young people knew more of life and less of books. That was the cause of much of my loneliness.

I had made up my mind that to men I was hopelessly unattractive; so I defiantly turned away from them and pretended to myself that I didn't care. The outer result was to make me prudish.

The men I worked for were mentally stimulating. And they were older and married, which to my mind put them definitely in another generation. I had complete confidence in my intelligence and ability. So I poured myself into my work and was at ease.

CHAPTER VI

Eunice's Doll

IT WAS Miss Craddock herself who brought Eunice Johns to work in the office. Miss Craddock was short of stature, but so emphatic that she looked like a tug-boat with Eunice in tow like a canoe. The tug-boat piloted the fragile canoe to a desk next to her own, fussing over it with maternal care. It was clear to everybody that from now on Miss Craddock would have a pet. This might have aroused antagonism on the part of the rest of us, but enmity faded away before something radiant and winning in the girl. We all began at once to like her. She was small and slim, with smooth honey-colored hair and blue eyes too large for her face. The London *Times* once published a letter from a man who found the Paris midinette delicately attractive, because of undernourishment, which makes her eyes too large, her complexion transparent, and gives her an *allure nonchalante*. He would have found Eunice appealing for the same reasons. She did not have enough to eat. Her eyes also were too large, her skin too transparent, her grace too fe-

brile. She earned six dollars a week and lived on it. She lived in a starved, mean religious boarding house on Stuyvesant Square. How I wish I could remember its name!

Eunice and I became close friends. I loved the little laugh that ran under her soft voice—the low voice of the partially deaf. With all her ready friendliness, she was reserved, and some months passed before I realized the profound impulse that vitalized her.

She needed self-abnegation as other people need bread. Until she was able to give freely and fully to a number of people, she did not find happiness. In the little town where she had grown up the church and its organ had been her only spiritual outlet. She took simply and seriously the Christian idea and tried to practice it. She came nearer doing it than anyone else I have ever known. Hers was not the virtue of a fool or a slave. Her mind was keen, her spirit quick, alert, and proud.

Even at that time, on her pay of six dollars a week, she managed to live a life of continual self-devotion. To her sister, who had tuberculosis, she gave food, time, and thought. They lived together in one room and she had a day-and-night fear that because of her own undernourishment and overwork she too might become consumptive. Probably the only reason she did not was her

determination not to. Other people needed her too much.

But this was not all. After a hard day's work and a slim dinner, she spent many of her evenings teaching in a church settlement in Hell's Kitchen —of course without pay. The settlement or chapel or whatever it was belonged to a rich church in the center of town. Many of its members could easily have paid Eunice for this work. That would have been good for their souls, but would not have been good for hers. Her other evenings were spent in a free evening high school, studying bookkeeping. She did not care much about books and she thought it sinful to dance, but she had a lively sense of fun.

We took long walks together and talked of the things that girls of twenty usually discuss. But I felt that she had some unexpressed trouble. Her lovely laughter seemed to cover an inner pain. Perhaps all the girls felt this instinctively, because everybody was more courteous to Eunice than to anyone else. Miss Craddock's voice softened when she spoke to her. I knew that she worked too hard, studied too hard, and did not have enough to eat. I knew that she suffered from Miss Craddock's harshness to the other girls. But there seemed to be something else—something almost unbearable. Occasionally we spent the night

together. One such time she lay in my arms all night long and cried and told me the whole pitiful little story.

She had come to New York to live with a family of friends from home. There were a mother, a son, and a daughter. The girl was ambitious and formally religious. The boy appealed at once and overwhelmingly to Eunice. She saw him strong and handsome and blond of body—sinful of soul. His mother had spoiled him; his sister had robbed him of will and responsibility. Eunice fell in love with him. She would. She was intensely a mother, a girl of strong feelings and strong spirit, who would naturally love a weak man. She set out to win him to a better existence.

Like other young men, he danced and drank a little; even these were cardinal sins to Eunice's mind. They were so important in her eyes that they blinded her to his real faults. She mistook his hard selfishness for determination; his weak drifting for dissatisfaction with material business. So she thought that his real place was in the ministry—there he would be automatically cleansed of sins; there his charm would sway multitudes; there he could be indifferent to that harsh business world which would not let him hold a job.

At twenty-five he was adrift in life, and he listened to Eunice's beautiful voice and looked into

her large blue sweet eyes—also no doubt he thought that here lay his future. They had all been poor people in a small Calvinistic town, where the minister had been the greatest person, the only one of assured social position. So, encouraged by his sister and holding hard to Eunice's hand, he stopped his dancing and drinking and spasmodic job-hunting and studied for the ministry. To his mother's delight, he was at last ready to be ordained. It had meant a long fight both for him and for Eunice.

And then came disaster. It came led by the hand of happiness. The two young people were engaged to be married. I think he really loved her. But he was weak—a doll of clay for the strongest woman. His sister thought their love silly and their marriage unpractical. She took her turn at manipulating the doll. And swiftly she pulled the strings. He married, suddenly but elaborately, the daughter of the richest man in the congregation, threw up the ministry, and went into business—to prosper fatly on the fruits of his unrighteousness toward Eunice and toward his wife. Six months had passed since that bleak day when he had been married. Eunice had fed her grief into the silence of her heart and her body; but the day before, the sister had tried to be kind to her and she was filled with anger and humiliation.

As far as I know, she never entered a church again. It was no longer a lovable refuge for her loneliness, but a reminder of tragedy—more than that, it had played her false; she had brought a lost soul to it and it had destroyed that soul. After that, how could she urge erring young sinners in Hell's Kitchen to come to the altar and be purified? And so she was bitterly unhappy, for she had at one time lost her friends, her lover, and her church.

I was heartbroken. I felt that life for her was forever at an end. Six dollars a week, a sick sister to support, and now this wreck of love! But her life was far from over, and this tale had a joyous ending.

She finished her bookkeeping course and became a finished accountant, making an excellent salary. Her sister got a good job in the mountains and married a young man who was also consumptive. They live there now, happily; of course they have no children. Eight years passed. One day when she was thirty, I saw Eunice. She looked haggard, with heavy lines about her mouth. But at thirty-five I saw her again. She had married a kind man with little aptitude for business and a large love of music. She had had three children in five years. She was poor; but the lines had disappeared from her face and she looked

young and happy. And even the war helped her; for her father had such large orders in his poor little factory in the country that they all moved away from New York and worked with him and were vastly contented and prosperous.

With a husband and five children to whom she can give, to whom she can sacrifice, whom she can mold, Eunice has been happy. As for my telling her story here . . . her name was not Eunice, and there is just enough disguise so that only a few who know already will recognize it.

She does not read D. H. Lawrence, who in his floundering in the depths of human consciousness has come with uncanny accuracy on strange truths. In *The Captain's Doll* in a few words he would rob Eunice of all joy in self-sacrifice:

> The most loving and adoring woman to-day could any minute start and make a doll of her husband. . . . No matter how much she loves her man—she could start any minute and make a doll of him. And the doll would be her hero; and her hero would be no more than her doll. . . . If a woman loves you, she'll make a doll out of you. She'll never be satisfied till she's made your doll. And when she's got your doll, that's all she wants.

Eunice was one of the women who try to make dolls. It was a dangerous business. It consumed the molder and destroyed the molded. But it is not merely her husband and her lover whom

Eunice will try to mold; she will make a doll of her son, of her daughter, of anyone in whom she has sufficient interest. It is part of the expression of her powerful maternal impulse . . . maternal impulse which is as self-set as all other creative impulse. In her desire to change this man from his own life to one of service to mankind, she was trying to make a doll of him according to her ideal. She was not considering either his happiness or his desire, though she thought she was. She was consulting her own needs rather than his.

And yet . . . there is another side to all that. The world is full of weak little words . . . words lying around helpless and doing nothing. D. H. Lawrence takes these words and molds them into active creations . . . sometimes splendid and powerful, sometimes muddled and feeble. So, too, there are helpless and undirected souls lying about, and the creative mother woman is forced, because of her strength, to turn them into something . . . sometimes splendid, sometimes muddled.

CHAPTER VII

Bound in Morocco

THE swift growth of many a business must look to the outsider like the East Indian trick, in which the little boy climbs an invisible rope to astonishing heights. The firm of Merrill & Baker rose swiftly as magic, and its later failure showed that the rope by which it had risen was as unsubstantial as that of the Eastern magician. In my time the organization seemed as solid as it was vast. There was one whole department, for instance, with which we in the mail-order end had no business contact at all. In its handsome offices on another floor mahogany cases shone richly with beautiful books on fine soft deckled-edged paper, illustrated with aquarelles and wood-cuts. These were *de luxe* limited editions and sold at from ten to a thousand dollars a volume, to New York millionaires.

These sets were not sold to lovers of beautiful books. The clean beauty of a limpid type page, the delicate etching, the promising warmth of vellum—these had no seduction for the newly rich who paid fantastic prices for our sets. Lovers

of books do not buy showy sets, they pick up individual volumes made with care. Our books were gaudy and expensively made. If some of them were also beautiful, it was an accident because the young man who at the moment directed the manufacturing had a passion for books. The people who bought Merrill & Baker's sets were trying to buy with money some certainty about their intellectual standing; they had a clutching desire to be exclusive; they were snobs to whom the limited number of impressions in an edition and the high price gave some social satisfaction.

About this department floated our super-salesmen, splendidly dressed individuals, actors in mufti, strutting in cutaway coats and speaking mellifluously. These men were different from the poor struggling salesman who usually comes into your office to sell you a set of books. They were the archangels of the bookselling world. Among them was a little Irishman always in correct English morning costume, with a voice of plush. He earned thirty-five thousand dollars a year through selling books that were over-priced to people who did not want them.

One day he came into our department and paraded among the desks and people, boasting of his victories.

"Oh, yes." His delight was condescending;

he smoothed back his hair. "Oh yes, I can sell George any time."

"George who?" I asked, unkindly.

"George Gould, of course. That's easy, selling George. But you know what I did to-day, sister?"

"Not unless you tell me," I said. I had heard of it all over the place—it was a superb feat of salesmanship. Everybody was talking about it, but I didn't want to tell him so.

"Well, I went up to see that man Bullard. You know—you've seen his name in the papers—he made a lot of money in breakfast food. He's just built himself a new house. Well, I just had to see him."

"Wouldn't it have helped to get a letter from Mr. Gould?" I interrupted.

"No, that's no good. Makes you out too unimportant. Better to walk right in like the president of a bank. They'll always see you—even the most high and mighty—if you do that. You know. Anyway, that's what I did. And I started him off right. What I said was:

" 'How do you do, Mr. Bullard? Mr. Gould mentioned you to me yesterday and told me about your beautiful new house.'

"He was just tickled to death. He came right back:

"'Oh yes—I remember Mr. Gould—met him in St. Louis at that meeting of the Katy.' (That's the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, sister.)

"Next thing he showed me all around the place. It's some grand house. A stately mansion, my dear, really a stately mansion," he said, getting back into his actor's rôle which for the moment had slipped off. "But what do you think? There isn't a library in it—no library at all! What velvet for me! I had to tell him.

"'Colonel, you've got a fine place here, but where's your library going to be?'

"He just looked at me. 'By George!' he says, 'I never thought of a library.'

"'Well, old man, there's a room downstairs, that big room you're using for a kind of smoking room—that ought to be a library. You could use it for a gentlemen's smoking room too. I'll tell you what I'll do for you,' I kept on quick before he could stop to think. 'It would be a privilege to contribute something to this home of palatial beauty. I'll fix your library up for you. I choose the books—you only draw a check when it is all done. You can forget all about the bother and fuss.'

"You know, he really looked glad. He was just scared to death at the idea of picking out a lot

of books. I saw that one thing was kind of worrying him yet, and I let him get it off his chest.

"'Do you know, though, my wife, she . . . she likes a color scheme. You know there's the blue room and the red room and the green room and the pink room. And you know books are all kinds of colors. I don't want to spoil the color scheme in that room.'

"'Don't you bother about that,' I told him. 'We'll get you nothing but perfectly beautiful books that fit in with the luxury of the rest of your mansion. Everyone of them will be a *de luxe* special edition, limited. There won't be more than a hundred people in this country that have them ——' But you know all that stuff I got off. But here's what I banged out that clinched him: 'Bullard, I'll have every single one of those books bound especially for you in a rich red tooled leather.'

"'Red?' he says. 'Is that elegant?'

"You know, sister, you mustn't let them change your mind. So I said fast: 'Yes, red. Red is best. In strong sunlight sometimes blue fades a little.' Lots of 'em do want blue that fades so that the books'll look old, but of course Bullard didn't—he wanted 'em all to look as new as they could be got. I landed him—just that easy.

"'All right.' He fell like a lamb. 'Make 'em

good books—you know, serious books. I have a lot of educated college people coming here. I want the books to be right.'

"And so now I'm fixing it up for him. What do you think of that?"

As this agent would make ten thousand dollars commission on the order, he could be excused for a little boasting—still ——

"How do you do it?" I was surprised.

He sat down by my desk and fixed his eyes on me in a stiff stare.

"I'll tell you. Do you see how I'm looking at you? If I kept it up I could make you do anything I wanted. That is the way I look at them" —the phrases rolled out sonorously—"I hypnotize them. I hypnotize them. Until they sign on the dotted line they're my slaves and my servants."

It was funny, of course. We all laughed about it. But maybe he did hypnotize them a little bit. Certainly some extraordinary personal force is required to do the kind of work he did. For these customers bought the most haphazard conglomerations—"bound in full morocco leather, stamped in gold—with silk headbands and handmade paper and illuminated title pages."

At one time the house was preparing an elaborate work of this sort on mediæval literature, to be sold at one hundred dollars a volume. It was

to contain beautiful reproductions of pages from old manuscripts. Opposite each was to be another page translating the Norman French and monk's Latin into modern English. But who was to do this job? A young Englishman applied—let us call him Crighton. He had all kinds of documents from an English university. His letters of recommendation were excellent. It never occurred to anyone in this particular office to investigate any of them or to doubt their genuineness. He was given the job. And he turned up in a few weeks with complete translations, gracefully done. Later it appeared that he did not know a word of the curious and difficult old French of most of the manuscripts, nor any Latin, and that he did not know even modern French. He had looked up the writers of the scripts in the public library and then had made up the kind of thing they should have written. This was not found out until the books had been printed and sold and paid for. The sets went out to subscribers . . . a thousand sets at five hundred dollars a set . . . and not one single complaint ever came from a customer.

Much later Merrill & Baker found out about this rascality. They were about to publish a set of books reproducing Assyrian, Egyptian, and other old inscriptions, with translations. The

same man Crighton was hired for the job and was sent to an eminent professor of Oriental languages who had agreed to act as advisory editor for the publication. The two men sat in a quiet room, with deep large chairs, lofty windows, and enticing walls of books that climbed from floor to ceiling. In a corner stood a tea wagon with cups of Sèvres china. Through the window New York lay spread for miles, with glimpses of distant bridges and a hint of the Harlem River—a room where learning rested warmly and easily. At one side of the wide desk sat the professor, serene and a little remote from the affairs of this bitter world. At the other, the thin, restless, shifty-eyed young man, leaning brightly forward.

"You were at Oxford?" the professor began.

"Yes. I studied under Max Mueller there."

"Oh, you did!" The professor was pleased. "Then these hieroglyphics will be a simple matter for you. Will you be kind enough to transcribe them for me?"

He handed across the desk a page covered with snakes and fishes and triangles and birds.

Crighton bent over the paper, pored over it intently, occasionally glancing sidewise at the older man, who sat waiting patiently, but who began to look a little puzzled.

"Well," finally brazened Crighton in a bright,

quick voice, "this snake here means a meeting. I'll have to take a little more time at the rest —"

The quiet man of learning broke into the middle of the sentence. "I think there is some misunderstanding, young man. I am very busy today. Good-by."

Crighton hurried out, actually relieved for the moment, though he knew his job was gone. A report of this conversation made Merrill & Baker investigate the earlier work, when they discovered the fraud.

Crighton was energetic, with enough intelligence to make a good living. Yet something forced him into these lying stupidities by which he half starved.

He was like another man I know—one who might have been pleasantly and prosperously successful, but who instead is worried and in debt—because he cannot help lying. His lying is as futile and childish in outer meaning as that of Cocteau's *Thomas l'Imposteur*, though, like *Thomas*, he must find an inner satisfaction in it. He is the most obliging person I have ever known, always ready at any moment to do what you want done. If you are in the mood for a walk, he is; if you want to play golf, he does; if you want to work, he wants to work; he will stay up all night to do a man a favor.

It should have been easy for him to sell great quantities of advertising, because he is shrewd, good-natured, and has high animal spirits; he quickly turns a customer into a friend. But before long he tells that friend some absurd lie, or plays him a trick by which our *Thomas* gains twenty-five or fifty dollars. Or he makes an impossible promise, on which the customer acts. And so he loses one after another of his customers and friends.

As he grows older the light sweetness of his youth is giving way to strain and misery. He sees what he has done and he cannot help going on and doing more of it. Road after road is closing to him. The number of new people who do not know of his career and who might give him a job will finally peter out. One of the brightest of young advertising men of years ago is turning into a nervous failure.

A friend once said to him, "Why *are* you such a liar?"

"I don't know," he said. "I can't help it."

He cannot help it. There are two deep needs that drive him. One is the need to be liked; it is this that makes him do favors for people. And it is this that makes him tell any lie to get a pat on the back. But there is something else, too. In

many ways a child in mind, he feels himself lost in the world of grown-up people.

Crighton, too, had never grown up. Once he stopped a friend of mine on the street. He looked shabby and wretched.

"What are you doing now?" said this friend.

"Nothing," answered Crighton, "for the moment. I'm going to England to-morrow."

"What for? Got a job there?"

"No, I'm going over to see my mother, to get some new winter underwear."

His mother had made him so dependent on her that he could not move in a straight line without her help, and he even seized the feeble excuse of needing new underwear to go across the sea to get her psychic support. She had taught the child to lean on her and then, when he was grown, had said to him, "Now go and stand on your own feet." The feet were not strong enough, they had never been trained; they had been held in a vise of parental strength, as were the feet of Chinese women of old time in their bindings. As well expect such a child to walk strongly and fearlessly in the world as to ask that Chinese woman to tramp twenty miles over rough country.

But Crighton's glaring swindle meant nothing to the people who bought these expensive sets. They never saw the mistake. It was our belief at

the time that none of the subscribers ever read the books. At about the same time another publisher, through a printer's gross carelessness, sent out three thousand sets of Shakespeare that were full of glaring mistakes—folios bound in upside down, errors in spelling, repeated folios, folios left out —a mess of confusion. The publisher sued the printer for delivering such books. And the court decided against the publisher because not one complaint ever came from his three thousand customers, and he could not prove that he had been damaged. No wonder we all developed a contempt for our customers.

But none of these happenings were as strange as the story of the firm itself. L. K. Merrill, a man of over fifty, had kept a little bookstore on Fifth Avenue for years. He felt himself a failure, felt that his chance for any other career had gone with his youth. He sat in his dark, book-piled place, fuming about bad times and no money. And then along came Mr. Baker, justice of the Supreme Court of Indiana, who I think knew John Ridpath's family—and they conceived the idea of selling Ridpath's History of the World on installments.

About a year after I left their racy, lively office, Merrill & Baker failed. Thus came to an end one of the most curious organizations that ever

mushroomed into prosperity and fell with a crash. While I worked there it was a live and vivid company doing business all over the world, with three floors of offices in Sixteenth Street, a dozen branches in the United States, an office in London, one in Australia, one in the Philippines, and connections even in India. To-day it has vanished off the earth like the rain of its springtimes; most of the people who had an important part in it are dead, and the books it sold are probably stacked unread in a few libraries where books are used as furniture.

The business leaped and spread and bloomed. But it was a hectic bloom; its fevered existence was over in five years. The Merrills kept taking money out of the cash drawer, without counting, recklessly. They were unused to wealth and found the things it could buy irresistible.

CHAPTER VIII

Through with Stenography

THE business mind does not like clear-cut contracts, either verbal or written. It prefers that everything should be a little vague. It feels in this vagueness a chance to get a slightly greater advantage. The shrewd mind trusts its own ability to get the better of the other fellow if everything is not quite clear.

The business mind is also likely to be honestly muddled and a little frightened at definite, precise agreements. It likes to putter along. Look at almost any business contract, whether drawn up by lawyers or otherwise—and you will find how formal, precise-sounding words can be used to cloud and befog. When you make a new deal with a business man, he likes to say: "There won't be any trouble about that. We'll take up all these things as they come along." I never objected to this, since I felt able to take my own part in such fencing.

Out of such a vagueness of contract, acrid disputes began between the Merrills and Mr. Clark. J. C. knew that there was two thousand dollars

in commissions due him on his department's sales. The Merrills claimed that this was a misunderstanding of the contract, that it did not read that way.

So after much bitter quarreling J. C. left and went to Buffalo, where he became advertising manager of the H. O. Company, manufacturers of a breakfast food.

The Wanamaker connection came to an end at about this time, and the department in which I had had such a good time ceased to exist. I did not want to work for any other department there. In the beginning they had paid me eight dollars a week, and after a year and a half I was getting sixteen. This was a little more than standard pay for stenographers at that time, equal to about twenty-eight dollars in 1924.

This was the end of stenography for me. I was never technically a good stenographer. I never did learn the shorthand systems right, I was a rather careless typist. But I had such an intense interest in the work of my department and its personalities and such a love for playing with words that I was a good secretary. I have had many stenographers since. I remember one, pretty and gentle; she never made a mistake, technically she was proficient; but she had no interest in anything I was saying, she never seemed to think

that the dictation had any relation to life, even when it was about fashions, perfumes, and cosmetics—in which, aside from her work, she was much absorbed. She was a nice girl, but as a secretary she was tiresome. There was another girl, who had been a stenographer for eight years (she went to work at fifteen) and still made mistakes. But her enthusiasm was lively. She detested her work, and so had to get away from it and became one of my best copywriters. Three years after she came to work for me at forty dollars a week a large advertising agency was paying her a hundred dollars a week. The stenographer who is willing to remain only a stenographer is usually just waiting to be married. And often she is ashamed of being a stenographer, and says, "I'm doing secretarial work." And, naturally, what she is ashamed of doing, she does badly.

That doesn't apply to the year-after-year stenographer who without title and without pay runs the boss's job and the boss's business. There are thousands of such women in the United States—thousands. In certain big law offices finely trained lawyers sit and dig out the law and the tricks and the decisions at small pay, while the showier members of the firm get the money and the glory. So, too, in many an office an imposing man or woman draws the big salary, while some devoted, silly,

able secretary not only does the work, but makes the decisions. Many of these women, quite unconsciously, are in love with their employers, and think them a little like gods. Others do it because it is their nature to run things, and modern business is not yet modern enough to give them the opportunity they need.

It is my opinion that, except love, money, or pull, stenography is a woman's shortest cut to a big job. Everybody knows the business world is full of people who entered it with such powerful introductions that they will always be cared for, no matter how incompetent they may be. It is not only the sons of rich men who have such influence. In one advertising agency where I worked there was a large rubber-tire account which was being adequately handled by a copywriter who was bright and not overpaid. One day in came a new tall young newspaper man from the Middle West. He was introduced as a new copywriter come to learn the business.

"He's a nephew of Mr. So-and-so," said the copy chief to me—Mr. So-and-so being the president of the tire company.

This inexperienced young man, who had until then made forty dollars a week on a Chicago newspaper, was paid four hundred dollars a month and soon was handling the rubber-tire account,

with the help and advice of lesser slaves. Other advertising accounts were given him to work on and his salary was raised. And he has since become a highly successful, highly paid member of the organization. He was intelligent, and did just as good work as the other young man who had handled the business before him, but he was paid about four times as much as his predecessor. And without the influence he would never have had the job at all.

And everybody knows that there are companies that like to employ people who have a private income. Some of these do it for reasons of pure snobbishness and some do it because they can thus pay smaller salaries.

"Ah yes," says the owner of a certain woman's magazine, when he is employing new help, to the girl who protests about the smallness of the pay, "but you know, my dear Miss So-and-so, it is an honor to work for this publication."

And there are enough fairly well-to-do people who agree with him to make it possible for him always to get a number of clever young people at small salaries.

As for love, who would be so foolish as to deny that a man in love with a woman will try to help her in a business way if he can, or that a woman who loves a man will do the same thing? Or even

that that lighter thing, better expressed by the French word *amour*, will be used in the same fashion?

Most girls haven't any influence or any money and have an objection to using love . . . so to my mind stenography remains the best way.

I stayed with Merrill & Baker a year and a half—eighteen crowded months—in which I began to take stenographic dictation rapidly, dropped the shorthand pencil for good, learned to handle my own correspondence, and finally wrote my first few advertisements.

I have heard many a stenographer say that women have no chance in business because they are set at typewriting or clerical work and expected to do only that. Of course, everybody is expected to do only that. But why do what's expected? As it happened, I got bored with taking letters on the dictating machine, so I asked if I might write my own. My boss, busy enough, said, "Go ahead." Some of the letters were wrong and some were right. After a little all were right. Then I got bored with that and ached to write an advertisement. I wrote some secretly. They seemed to me very bad. When I could no longer resist I said to Mr. Clark, "On that big series of Ridpath ads, won't you let me write some?"

"You bet," he replied. "Try it."

I wrote three or four advertisements. He used perhaps one paragraph out of all of them. To a starving ambition this seemed real food. It was a year later and in another job before I wrote a whole advertisement that was used.

I know there are situations out of which one cannot climb; in which one cannot go ahead. I have had some like that myself. There are women who have sufficient private income to leave under such circumstances. There are others who have to stay or starve. I never had enough money during all these early years to afford to leave a job at all. But I often left, anyway.

Once I remained five years with an organization, but my work there changed continuously. Twice I stayed three years, but as a rule my stay was not more than a year or so at a time. I did not find that these short stays made any difference or stood in my way.

My temperament, which loved a risk, which was bored with certainty, always forced me into something new. I do not recommend this particular kind of temperament. Carried to excess, it wastes its substance on roulette or horse-racing or the stock market. In moderate amounts it makes life varied and fascinating. There is always something new on the next page if you want to find it.

The frequent changing, the new scenes, new personalities, which happened to be a stimulus to me, might be an irritation to others. To many men and women satisfaction and success come only from sticking to certainties.

There is no recipe for getting on in business. My own method would work with few people. Indeed, it is not a method—it is a kind of character. Other characters, other ways. Perhaps if I had been of a less restless temperament I should have made what I consider a real business success. Ten years ago I might have spoken confidently of ways to get on. Now I realize that I know nothing about them. That's about all that experience has done for me—it has made me realize that my opinions are worth little.

If there is any such thing as a rule for a certain amount of happiness in a business career, it is, if possible, to suit work and surroundings to one's personality. And yet this is a ridiculous thing to recommend under the present organization of business. Not one person in a thousand has any choice about his business surroundings, and if such a choice exists, he has not enough experience and knowledge to know how to exercise it. Business is such an incompetent confusion that it is only by sheerest accident that anyone ever does the work he can do best.

Not long ago I met a man who is sensitive; who has an inferiority complex, and is obliging, popular, and agreeable. The principal of the expensive private school in which he was educated told him he would make a wonderful salesman. The poor young man had wasted some ten years of his life trying to be that wonderful salesman. Only a schoolmaster or somebody as unfamiliar with business life could have expected a young man who was sensitive and longed for the approval of others to make good at selling. The best salesmen I have known are impervious to insult, utterly indifferent to the desires of others. It is a nuisance, when you are trying to sell a man a large bill of goods, to have the thought come into your mind that it is an unkind thing to force the goods on him. If that thought comes too persistently you don't sell.

CHAPTER IX

A Pinwheel Office

IN MY next job I was as misplaced as this would-be salesman, and so equally a failure. I was in charge of a clerical desk, where I was supposed to order engravings and printing, to track down deliveries and check up the bills of printers, engravers, and paper-makers. It required highly technical knowledge, some of which I had picked up with Merrill & Baker. What I knew was not enough for my new employers, the Hampton Advertising Agency. This company was functioning furiously then; its progress and brilliance dazzled the business world. That was in 1903. Yet modern young advertising men have never even heard of it. Twenty years is a long, long time in the advertising business.

My new job barred thinking, but was full of little details which stung me like gnats. It was stupid to put me at that desk, and equally stupid of me to go there, but I was still only twenty-one years old, and young for my age. And I was elated because I was working for an advertising agency.

What, then, was so seductive about an advertising agency, and what is an advertising agency?

Suppose you are a manufacturer of shoes and have reached a point in your business where you wish to advertise your product. You know thoroughly, it is presumed, the shoe business, but you know nothing about advertising. If you are a practical man you go to an organization which knows all about advertising—in other words, the creature of American business which we call an advertising agency. You say: "Here are my shoes. I have a hundred thousand dollars a year to spend. What can you do?" The agency, if it is a good one, then studies your business, your markets, and your product. It recommends that you spend your advertising money in certain magazines or newspapers or in circulars to the wearers of shoes and to the stores which sell them. It devises new plans and ideas, sometimes clever and original, sometimes merely sensible, for selling your shoes. It writes advertising and plans illustrations for you. If you are not sure how much money you ought to spend, it recommends a certain expenditure.

Then the agency buys the space in the publications for you.

But the advertising agency is not paid by you.

Its payment comes in commissions from the newspapers and magazines.

This situation is rather ridiculous. Suppose you were building a house and your architect did not expect any payment from you, but was to be paid entirely in commissions from the manufacturers of the building materials. That is exactly the situation which exists between the advertising agency and its clients.

In the beginning the agencies came into being as solicitors of advertising for the publications. Each agency represented a group of magazines or newspapers. But as time went on they began to prepare copy and act as counsel to the advertiser. After a while, when the advertising business became technical and complex, the agencies found themselves on the other side of the fence. To-day they represent the advertiser and not the publications.

There is a complicated legal question mixed in with this, for the advertising agency considers itself the agent of one side to a transaction, while it receives its pay from the other side. You see how absurdly this works out. The more money an advertiser spends, the more commissions the agency makes. There is every immediate inducement to make the advertiser spend as much money as possible. There are a few agencies that are far-sighted enough to resist this immediate temp-

tation, because they know that they must help the customer succeed if he is to remain a live advertiser. But it is hard to stick to this far-sighted idea because of the fickleness of clients, who move their accounts around from agency to agency at the inspiration of little whims. After a few disheartening experiences with losing accounts for no reason at all, the agent begins to feel that he had better get all he can while the getting is good.

The agency ought to be paid by the advertiser rather than by the periodical. If you are unfamiliar with the situation, you may think that it is the agencies alone that cling to the present arrangement in the face of the hardened antagonism of the advertiser. No. There are agencies which would prefer to be paid by the advertiser, because they feel they would hold his confidence better. But the advertiser himself often stands firmly in favor of the present arrangement.

This is one of the stupidities which make ridiculous our American claims to being super-businessmen. The advertiser cannot get it out of his head that he is not paying anything, just because the cash is handed out by some newspaper or magazine. He cannot bear to give a definite sum each year to his advertising agency, although he knows he is paying it indirectly. The simplest common sense would show him that he would that

way actually save money and probably get better service. As things are now, he sometimes pays hundreds of thousands of dollars in commissions annually, yet he will not pay a fee which would probably be only half as much. But there is all over the world a queer love of possession that hates to give up directly. So that people will pay any kind of ridiculous indirect tax rather than a direct income tax.

In the days when I first saw them, advertising agencies were in the making. They were places of temperament, disorder, and imagination—much more than their business-like successors of to-day. The Hampton Agency had a large business. . . . I recall Regal Shoe, the H. O. Company, the American Tobacco Company, the Riker drug stores . . . in short, it was one of the leading agencies of the day. It was run like a pinwheel. The head of the firm set the tune—a tune like Honegger's *Pacific 231*—swift, noisy drunk with ideas, flashing with color. Nobody knew exactly what was going on at any time, except that much brilliant, original advertising went forth from those confused and disorderly offices. Dreiser has immortalized the Hampton Agency in his sketch of Harris Merton Lyon in *Twelve Men*. Lyon worked there, poor, shabby and neglected. He afterward worked in another agency where I was.

Not more than two people in either office knew that they had with them a writer of talent.

I was a failure at my job, but its muddled six weeks left vivid pictures in my mind. It was fun to be in the advertising business in those days. I loved it and from that time I was determined to be a copywriter in an advertising agency. A copywriter is the person who writes the enticing words you read in advertising, and who usually plans the advertisement—illustration and all, though he seldom does the actual drawing. It took me some ten years to reach this lofty plane. And then I remained there for just about a year and a half, finding the goal hardly worth while in money return.

During the six weeks with the Hampton Agency I spent most of the time in violent rows with the head of my department, who was as unfitted for his job as I was for mine—and with the head of the firm, who was also unfitted for his.

There were strict rules in this office about hours and being late, but nobody paid any attention to them. We were shut off in the back of a large loft with the copy and art departments, so that we should be undisturbed; but customers, strangers, newspaper solicitors wandered through at will

and the days were a long series of joking, joshing, hellos, quarreling, and gossip.

One night at about half past six o'clock, long after I should have gone home, I was trying, as usual, to straighten out my work. I have found out since that this business of overtime work is a suspicious affair. In it I always smell incompetence. We all worked overtime at that agency; we were all more or less mixed up. Anyway, my desk was in the wildest confusion, piled with papers, books, cuts, proofs, of ads. I really knew where every single thing was on that desk. I could always work that way. Mr. Hampton strolled in, with his bright black eyes and his nervous, joshing manner. He said with restrained irritation: "Look here, how can you work with your desk in such a mess? I can tell you, sister, that you'll never get anywhere in this world until you learn to keep your desk absolutely clear." There are still a few old-fashioned business men in 1925 who call me sister. In those days it was common—part of a sort of homeliness.

I was tired and trying hard. I blazed out in an angry reply. Strange that I should remember that after all this time. Years later my desk was always clear. One of my copywriters remarked

on that beautiful neatness, "Of course your desk is always nice and empty; you just throw everything on my desk to do." That is one of the secrets of a clear desk. You see many of them in fine offices. They belong to the people who may do the thinking, not to the ones who do the work.

At the end of six weeks with the Hampton Agency I was on the border of nervous collapse from overstrain, badly done work, and friction. So I resigned, to the relief of the boss, who did not want to fire me.

I was then twenty-one years old and had worked for less than two years. It was hard to know whether it just happened that my experience was crowded or whether I myself supplied the excitement by my own personality. By this time I could do the following things—all fairly well—take dictation, handle correspondence, order engravings, printing, and paper, make rough suggestions for advertisements, write a little advertising copy. I was earning eighteen dollars a week. A man would have been receiving twenty-five dollars for the same job, or perhaps would have had a bigger job with more money. The difference between the pay of men and women for the same work has largely disappeared in the advertising business, but it is still hard for women to get the

positions where the bigger money lies. There are some women copywriters getting from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars a week. There are few women executives getting more than that.

I seem to be as unable to stick to the run of my story as I was to stick to one job. When I left the Hampton Agency I had to fill in with temporary stenographic work for three weeks. Then Mr. Clark—Long John Silver—wrote me a note and told me of a new place that he thought should belong to me. It was as assistant to the advertising manager of a publishing house. Like Merrill & Baker, it is now out of existence. I thought it was just a *job* I was about to get. That was a mistake. Fate had me by the hand and was leading me to marriage and a wholly new life. Entirely innocent of these plans of destiny, I put on my best clothes, which were not elaborate and not particularly good. I was preserved from any error of over-dressing by lack of money and by lack of vanity. I had to wear what I had, and I could buy only things that would last forever. But I had learned that clothes made a difference. And once a young clerk with Merrill & Baker had startled me by admiring my eyes—for the moment without glasses. (I thought my green eyes

a disgrace, because when I was little other children had called me "Cat's Eyes" or "Green Eyes.") I looked into the mirror a little more carefully after that.

I remember the clothes in which I applied for this new job. A dark-blue voile skirt over a blue taffeta slip, small in the waist and wide at the feet, ankle length, of course, and rustling pleasantly. How I loved those rustling taffeta skirts with the shrrrr of the voile whispering over them! A little stiff jacket of tan covert cloth unsuited to me. The hat, now forgotten, was probably navy blue, a color unbecoming to me.

I put on these haphazard clothes and went to see Mr. George Metzger, then at the Hampton Agency. I said, "Would you give me a job if I came to you looking like this?"

He laughed, but considered the matter very seriously. It was no play with me. I needed that job.

He said, "If these people here had any sense they'd never let you go. I'd give you a job any time."

So encouraged, and armed with a letter of introduction from Mr. Clark, I set out to an office on lower Fifth Avenue, where at a desk in a big shabby office I met a tall, joyous young man with

blue eyes and curly hair. His name was W. E. Woodward and he is now my husband.

But that page in our lives was hidden away for many years. We regarded each other carefully, of course. I decided he would be a good man to work for. I was equally impressed by the mischief in his eyes, the width of his shoulders, and his gallantry. Force and strength were thrown into dramatic relief by the lightness of his manner.

He thought I was a solemn-looking little thing —bright and serious and not at all bad-looking.

But let us be honest. No unmarried girl from eighteen on ever meets a presentable man without one deep involuntary thought—"Am I going to marry him?" We can all pretend to be as modest and retiring as we please—indeed, in our teens we are apt to talk at length about how we will never marry . . . this last indicating an intense desire for love, and fear that it may never come. So that kind of thought flashed through my mind that day. But it was immediately dismissed. It did not seem likely.

W. said very little. "J. C. Clark thinks you're the finest secretary that ever lived. That's all I need to know. But tell me one or two things, won't you?"

"Surely."

"What do you want to do in life?"

"I want to write advertising."

"No other ambition?"

"I'd really like to write a novel—but that's out of the question."

"Why?"

"Well, I've tried and I haven't anything to say."

"What do you do when you're not working?"

"Read."

"What—newspapers and magazines?"

"Of course—but mostly books."

"Have you read Stephen Crane's story, *The Open Boat?* No? Well, don't miss it."

I was surprised—no one had ever interviewed me in this fashion before. I expected W. to say soon, "How much money do you want?" It is customary to ask this of job-seekers, who then name a figure a little higher than they expect to get—say twenty dollars. The employer comes back with the standard reply—"Oh, I'm afraid perhaps the job isn't big enough for you. It only pays sixteen dollars"—and then they compromise on eighteen.

But W. didn't do the expected—he never has, from that day to this. He said, abruptly, "We can pay you fourteen dollars a week, and in two months eighteen dollars."

"All right," I replied, much relieved. I hated haggling.

"Shake hands on it," said W., in what seemed to me a remarkably simple and democratic way for an august employer. We shook hands on the bargain.

CHAPTER X

The Game

WITH what joyous enthusiasm we all started that mail-order business for J. A. Hill & Company. We were still in the bright, glittering adventure of the mail-order "game." That word is seldom heard to-day! How drab are its substitutes—*venture, possibility, undertaking!* The advertising world was seething in those days with glory and risk—to-day it is solid with money.

The owners of J. A. Hill & Company felt sure that they would get rich in this mail-order business. They took off their coats, rolled up their shirt sleeves, and slapped a heavy ante on the table. They played generously, and did not count their pennies. And W. was full of fresh interest in the new plans. My enthusiasm knew no bounds. We all got very busy at once. But we were all mistaken. The bright sun of the mail-order book game was just about to set. In order to make money at it during the following years a certain dry meanness, closeness, and penny-polishing were needed. At this not J. A. Hill nor

W. nor myself was particularly good. However, for some time all went well.

My own work was varied and colorful. I helped write advertising—I superintended the manufacture and mailing of millions of circulars—I was a sort of general housekeeper for the department.

The first set of books we sold was the New Science Library. It was made up of the work of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Tyler—and was modern with some volumes on electricity. In order to help write advertising for these books I had to read them a little. Darwin and Spencer were hard going for my unscientific mind, but Tyler's *Anthropology* was fascinating. In selling this set, W. originated a new idea in advertising. He had an advertisement headed, "Learn How to Think." This was the father—the forgotten ancestor—of the pages and pages of correspondence-school advertising which look at you reproachfully to-day from the pages of all magazines. We sold large numbers of these books through advertising in the great national periodicals—the *Saturday Evening Post*, the Sunday newspapers, the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *McClure's Magazine*, and *Everybody's*. The *Christian Herald* and *Sunday School Times* were, oddly enough, excellent media for us for that Darwinian work. And we sold

large quantities of an encyclopedia, of a set of Dickens, of semi-historical romances.

Many of these sales were made through circularizing lists of people who had bought other books. So as part of my job I had to superintend the mailing of several million circulars each year. Each mailing was a complicated affair. There would be an envelope containing a printed letter masquerading as a typed one, a circular or two and an order blank. These I had to order from their various makers. With what meticulous pains we chose the color of the typing of the letter—how we planned and worked over the choice of an envelope! And then came my special tribulation —seeing that all the circular matter was delivered to us on time. This last activity has ruined more tempers than any other single thing I know of in the advertising business. Like Paris dressmakers to-day, American printers, engravers, and envelope-makers in those days did not seem to understand the relation between a promise of delivery and its fulfillment. How we quarreled—how I raged at them and destroyed my own disposition! That was our idea of the best way to proceed. It is all a little calmer to-day. Anyway, it was in the course of these proceedings that I learned to swear with energy. I remember one day when a printer gave me a new excuse over

the telephone, I burst out, "Oh, hell!" in utter disgust. He was so ashamed for me and so startled that he said, "I beg your pardon," apologizing for my profanity.

The envelopes and other material drifted in and had to be counted. Then you had to hire a staff of women to address and mail the circulars. You found these by advertising in the newspapers and consulting various lists. You paid the girls from six to nine dollars a week. This kind of work is more easily handled when done by both men and women. The men are apt to be either "down and out," drunkards, or elderly men left stranded by a lifetime of hard work. One company employs an insane woman in this department. All day she sits and mumbles over her table. Her work is excellent. But we tried to take only "nice" girls. They were supposed to address a thousand envelopes a day, and seldom did. Since you based your calculations of expense and time on this figure, you were in a continual state of annoyance with yourself and everybody else. Then the envelopes were passed over to other girls, who typed in the names and addresses at the top of the circular letters, so each would look like a personal document. As purple and blue ribbons were used in those days, this matter

of matching ribbons was alone an exasperating performance, calling for watchful care.

Meantime other girls folded the circulars. It is fascinating to watch a trained girl doing this work. Her hands fly so, the paper seems to come alive. And then other girls put the inclosures in the envelopes and others seal them, and still others stamp them—all of these swift affairs in the hands of trained workers and very different from your way of sealing or stamping an envelope. At last, when the mailing day rolled around, we saw with incredulous relief the circulars in their drab mail bags piled on the trucks departing to the post office.

And then I went home on the subway, too tired to eat, and wondered what all the excitement had been about. I was rather a wreck, especially as to temper. What would it have mattered, after all, if the circulars had never been mailed at all? These unbusiness-like thoughts came rarely at twenty-two, but sometimes they came even then because, before going home, I had had to do the hardest part of my work. There was nothing more for the large staff of girls to do. I had to discharge all but about twenty. Most of these expected to be "laid off," but there were many who could not afford to be out of a job. It was a painful procedure. Always a few thoroughly incompetent

people were kept on throughout the year because I could not bring myself to let them go.

There was one old lady, a Miss Abbott, who had lived to be fifty-five years old in Boston with an apparently well-to-do father. Then he died and she had not one dollar. Some one helped her to come to New York, and I hired her to address envelopes. She was altogether sweet, dainty, good-natured—a child at fifty-five, with a lovely gayety. She had one extravagance. The beads at the Five and Ten Cent store sometimes forced her to do without dinner. She did not do a third of the work expected of her, though she struggled painfully all day long. Letting her go was out of the question. We kept her on for several years, and afterward I got her a number of other jobs with equally sympathetic people. She borrowed money occasionally, which she always returned. She was miserably unhappy under her little gayety, and at last began to grow fat on no food at all, and to decline into her dotage. And then suddenly I heard no more about her.

There were two sisters, Jewish girls. I hired them temporarily with a great many others, and when the big mailing was over notified them that there would be no more work. That night they stayed at their desks gloomily after the other girls had gone. And directly one of them came

up to me, shyly and awkwardly. In a heavy voice she pleaded:

"Won't you please try to have some work for at least one of us? It will be terrible if we're out of a job. I just can't go home and tell the family."

"But, you see, there is almost nothing left to do—except for our few permanent girls."

"We could learn to do your regular clerical work—we're both studying hard at evening high school. We've got a brother, who's got a talent —a regular genius—on the violin. And we must put him through. He's got to go to Europe—you know he couldn't do a thing without that. And my father is sick. My sister and I have to do everything."

"But why doesn't your brother go to work?"

She looked actually horrified. "With that genius? Oh no, no matter what happens to us—if we starve—he has to go on."

We kept the girls—they were earnest and willing. They got six dollars a week apiece. Later they earned a little more. They managed somehow to send the brother to Europe for a thorough training. Their youth, their dreams were given to that boy. Neither girl married. After some years the brother came back—and never amounted to anything. He played in some orchestra in the

Middle West, and married a girl who had a contempt for his family. Later that contempt spread also to him because he had no success. He has developed a neuralgic affection of the hand; at times he is able to practise, but as soon as he tries to perform in public the neuralgic pains start so that he cannot play at all. The two sisters are again helping him out, taking care of their parents and also of his child. The girls have only their dwarfed lives and their faded dream. Still, they are only about thirty-five—and are making a fair living. Perhaps they will have a new dream.

I was not fitted for this "firing" part of the day's work. Otherwise, I should not have lost my temper so often nor have suffered so from sympathy. A calm, even person, who knows that she can't change the economic system, and that people are only hard up through incompetence or drink, would have done much better. Fortunately, I had a dizzying variety of other things to do that I liked—writing the advertising, for instance. I loved that. And I found pleasure in running the department. Responsibility has always rested lightly on my shoulders. That anyone should fear it seems strange. I am successful with people who work for me. And I think they usually like it. But there were some difficult problems among the girls.

There was a Swedish girl—tall, buxom. Her blond hair made even more striking the fine, thin skin through which the blood seemed ready to burst. She was altogether a freer, bolder, stronger-looking person than any of the other girls. She was used to having her own way with men, and that way was a daring one. She became insubordinate almost at once. It must have been difficult for her to submit herself to the grave, small, and probably rather tyrannical person that I was. She was a competent worker, so I tried to be patient. One day when she had been playing about most of the afternoon I said to her, "Miss Johnson, I think you'd better stop playing and do some work."

She flared back in a fury: "I'm doing more work than anybody else. Anyway, you're not the head of this department. I won't take any orders from you. I'll tell Mr. Woodward."

And she flounced into W.'s office. I had to discharge her at once or seem ridiculous to the rest of my girls. It was a pity, because she was a bright, energetic person, good to look at. However, before she left she had managed to make a friend in another department. He was the best-looking man and at the same time the biggest spender in the immediate neighborhood. He was most kind to her. So that was that.

Mrs. X, daughter-in-law of a famous Confederate general, Governor of a Southern state, came one day with letters of introduction. She had apparently no other capital. Graciously, with long veil floating from her head, she glided down the long corridor in the big main office. She sat like a queen at the shabby table on which she addressed envelopes. She had all the air of a grand lady, but she was entirely incapable of making a living for herself. She did not earn her pay, but W.—grandson of a Confederate soldier—felt that we must keep her. How these Southerners do stick together!

Then there was my little round, rosy, chubby-cheeked stenographer, with a head of flaming red hair and a baby face. One morning she came to work in a state of hysterics. "Oh, oh!" she half wept. "I had thuch an *awful* time last night. Won't you help me? What *shall* I do? What shall I *do?* Oh, I'm tho *ashamed!*"

I spoke sharply. "Stop crying—now—at once."

She stopped.

"Now tell me what's the matter," I said, more gently.

"It's Mr. Cuttle." She named a printer who did work for us, a man with a delicate face and pointed beard, very gentlemanly in manner. She lisped a little: "He's been waiting for me every

thingle night when I get out, and he walks with me to the thubway station. He says dreadful things. I don't answer him a word. He wanth me to go to lunch with him, and then he wanth me to go to dinner with him. And I don't know what to do. I don't know how to thtop him."

She had, I fear, been seeing "Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model" and heard the wicked boss roar at poor Nellie, "Girl, I want your body. I'll give you gold."

"All right," I said. "Don't think about it any more. Just forget about it right now, from this minute on."

Mr. Cuttle was informed that he was to let our girls alone, and he did thereafter. We didn't give him much more work. That ended that.

Another stenographer put all her emotional energy into the church. She demanded nothing, but with sweet reserve and looking like a delphinium, she rose at five o'clock in the morning to go to St. Patrick's Cathedral before her day's work. She missed no novena, no ceremony which might satisfy the longing she did not understand. Although surrounded by friends in New York, she was too sensitive and retiring ever to get a lover or a husband. Last year I heard of her again. Poor and alone in the world, she is a patient at the free hospital on Blackwell's Island. For three weeks every

month she is sane and knows her condition; during the fourth week she has delusions. She thinks she is being pursued by men, that she is being seduced; she expects to have a baby. She has every kind of dream satisfaction by which insanity gives a moment's happiness to tortured human beings. During that one week she is happy. One recalls that the French psychiatrist, B. J. Logre, says that the most perfect examples of human happiness are found in certain kinds of insanity.

I had another secretary, a bright Irish girl who had been studying shorthand at night. She was able and alert, but came from a rough neighborhood and was one of the few girls I have ever seen in any office who was not clean. Her waists —all girls then wore white shirtwaists to work— were frequently wet through with perspiration. Her hair was untidy and unwashed. It was impossible to have her about, in spite of her good work. One of the more important executives in another department needed a new secretary and I thought she could earn more money there, but the promotion seemed hopeless because of her personal habits. So one day I said to her:

"Miss Mahoney, there's a better job for you in this place. You will get four dollars a week more at once. I wonder if you'd be willing to change—er—er—to do some things differently—

in order to get it. I don't like to say what I'm going to say to you, but I feel it must be said.

"You really are a mighty bright girl. You're a good stenographer and you will make a lot of money before you get through. But men are peculiar . . . they—they like a girl always to have a nice fresh shirtwaist. You'd think they wouldn't notice about hair—but your hair is very strong and healthy and probably needs washing at least once a week ——"

She thanked me, adopted all the suggestions, was promoted, was thereafter always trim and neat. She never forgave me.

I remember a bright, joyous Frenchman there—that is, he had a French father and an American mother. But he did look French, with curly blond hair and the blue eyes of Normandy. Also he knew four French words. *"C'est la vie,"* he would say with a perfect accent and a Parisian manner. Like many another light and fluffy person, he was pleasant to have around. You'd greet him, "How's everything this morning?"

"Two laps ahead of the wolf," he would carol.

Or you'd say, "Did the business have a good week last week?"

"Two laps ahead of the wolf; *c'est la vie,*" would be the gay reply in a manner as though the

most original of conceptions were being put forward.

He and his wife led the kind of existence that most people in the United States consider usual in New York. It is really uncommon enough to seem extraordinary to other New Yorkers. They lived in a dark little place up five flights of stairs and without an elevator, somewhere on Central Park West. There they hid away. But in the evenings they bloomed. They had correct and handsome evening clothes and night after night could be seen in the theaters or restaurants, all togged out in glory. They had to skimp everything else to do this night living, and they had a glorious time.

He shone vividly by contrast with his direct superior, a bearded patient man, bent over his desk, coughing his life away day after day with tuberculosis. Coughing—dying by inches—a comptroller of ability. He could have been saved by going to Colorado, but he had a family and he could not afford to leave them long enough to save himself. He finally had to leave them altogether.

One of the sweetest people in that office was a distinguished-looking white-haired man, with such an air of vitality and joy. His wife had the drug habit and he was living in a daily hell.

And there was the girl with the alluring brown eyes. Frail, thin, faded, demure—she seemed rat-faced to women, a pretty little thing to men. Most of the girls were rather sorry for her because she looked so pitiful; few of them suspected her bold and continuous adventures in the lands of illicit love. But a little side glance under her lowered lids as the men went by, a heavy-lidded look, a trembling of the mouth—and she had a new lover.

CHAPTER XI

Fish and Spice Cakes

ON the whole, the girls at Hill's were like a New England boiled dinner—all cooked in the same pot and without seasoning.

About most of them all I seem to remember is a high stiff pompadour and a ladylike manner. They were nice in this office. They specialized in being nice.

Except for those in my own department, the girls did not like me. They had good reasons for this. I was in the amorphous position of passing from stenography into a higher state, not quite a subordinate—not quite an executive. I did not fit into any mental pigeonhole. The personnel of an American office is sharply divided into classes. The job defines your class, as birth might define it in England. You go to lunch with your own class, you gossip with it, you go home on the subway with it. Any social relation with a higher caste, especially if you are a girl and the other person is a man, is suspect.

This undecided position was made worse because I was always to be seen with a book in my

hand, coming to work, leaving work, and even eating with a book propped against the sugar bowl. This was not so bad when that book happened to be something like *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which they all read. But if it were even something as light as *Les Beaux Messieurs de Bois Doré* they looked at me with sidelong distrust. A touch of contempt relieved their annoyance when it was a book of verse.

Even this was not the worst. I dressed badly. Most of the girls looked trim and charming in their stiff white shirtwaists and high collars. I looked absurd in masculine clothes. They didn't know that I wanted to look nice as they did, and that I merely did not know how.

An old friend of W. E. W.'s, a Frenchman, came in to see him one day, and taking it for granted that I would not understand, said after a glance at me, "*Quelle jolie fille!*" W. E. W., not knowing what the man might say next, replied, hastily, "Let's go out for a walk!" But I was overwhelmed with surprise and joy. I suspected there was something odd about the taste of the jolly Frenchman, that he had been in the wilds of South America (he had just come from there) so long that any girl would have looked pretty to him, but I treasured the remark none the less. So I tried to make myself look better, but I really

did not have the knack. Most girls look what Dreiser would call "trig" on little money, because they have an intense interest in and a certain feeling for clothes. Also because they can do a little sewing. My interest was mild, my feeling for clothes had to be developed, and I couldn't sew at all. I did make my own hats, but that, dear reader, can be done with huge stitches and not much skill —provided no one ever sees the inside. My clothes were of painfully good materials, distressingly well made and solid.

I don't blame those girls a bit for not liking me. Imagine some day—for instance, a bright morning at half past twelve. The lower slaves all went to lunch at twelve o'clock, the higher ones at twelve thirty or one. At twelve thirty there would be half a dozen of us in the dressing room—the chief bookkeeper, fat and good-natured; the chief stenographer, trim and prim; one or two other girls. I would walk into the dressing room in my unbecoming black skirt and white shirtwaist, wash my hands, throw on my hat. The rest of them were putting on rouge and powder before the mirror. Not to use make-up was an unpardonable affectation of superiority in their minds. I considered it a real sign of superiority. The truth was that I had a complexion then that didn't need any help.

However, nobody liked to go out to lunch alone —even I didn't, in spite of the book standing up against the sugar bowl—and so directly one of the girls would say to me: "Are you going out alone to-day? Wouldn't you like to go with me?"

And I would say: "Yes, I would. Where'll we go?"

"Well, it's Friday to-day. Suppose we go to Cushman's. We can have some of that fried flounder. I'm famished—I've got to have a decent meal to-day."

So we would stroll up to Cushman's, perhaps three or four of us on a bright sunny day, with our high pompadours, our flaring skirts, and our stiff white collars, our sensible high shoes.

The talk was not even spiced by slang.

"Well," the chief stenographer would begin, "I just am not going to stand it—not one more day. Simply ghastly."

"What's the matter—Brewer again?"

"Mm! I should say so! What do you s'pose I saw last night? The two of them—him and that Farley woman, together, in Cavanaugh's. No wonder she was dressed up like a horse yesterday in the office."

"Brazen."

"Indecent."

"Outrageous."

"I wonder if his wife knows what's going on?"

"Poor thing! What could she do if she did?"

"Ever hear him talk to her on the phone? . . . like to a dog."

"Well, what would you expect? He talks to everybody who works for him the same way."

"Just thinks he owns the earth because he's some kind of high mogul in the Royal Arcanum."

"I've got a great mind to tell Mr. Rouse. He'd stop it."

"No, don't. He's got enough trouble without being bothered. Did you see how he coughed this morning? It would be a shame to make his life any harder."

"Anyway, I wouldn't know how to begin to tell him. I wouldn't know how to tell a man a thing like that."

Of course no one ever did tell Mr. Rouse or anybody else in authority. Month after month and year after year the talk went on, and nothing ever came of it. Mr. Brewer mistreated his wife and scandalized the place with his mistress, and was rough and tyrannical with his girls. And the other girls raged and fumed, with one another —and that was all that came of it. All the girls and all the men in every office are in fuming anger about something day after day, and nothing is done about it.

"Well, I can tell you this," one of the girls would go on, "I'm not going to punch that time clock any more."

"Neither am I."

"What do they think we are—factory hands?"

This course of action was earnestly agreed upon about twice a week, but the time clock was rung just the same each day by all of them. They had enough satisfaction in these word rebellions to be able to stand their troubles. It was a case of free speech and contented slavery.

"You know," the head stenographer gossiped cheerfully, as we were sitting at the table, "when I got in the dressing room to-day that Stanley girl in the collection department was leaning out of the window, waving to those men across the way. She jumped like she'd been shot. Makes me weary! What will people think of the rest of us?"

Her worry was unjustified. With her prim pompadour and her prim face, nobody would ever think anything of her except the nicest of thoughts.

In offices most of the girls readily make friends with one another. But at Hill's this was not so. Oddly enough, the girls there never discussed their personal affairs. There was no friendship and no social relation outside the office among these better-paid stenographers and bookkeepers.

Each of them was so afraid of her perilious altitude of niceness that she dared not associate freely with anybody.

We would start back from luncheon. By that time, bored, irritated, I would be likely to do something to revive their waning dislike. Walking down Fourth Avenue I would remark, a little smugly, "I've got some shopping to do, so I don't think I'll go back with you."

The hour for lunch was up and they were going back in order to ring in on time. I rang the clock also, but took a perverse delight in ringing in from half to three quarters of an hour later. So I left them and went on. I did not ring in late to annoy the other girls, or to annoy my employers, but because I was made that way. Still, their annoyance gave me pleasure. The management sent me little notes once a week counting up the minutes I had lost by appearing for work at twenty minutes to ten in the morning and returning from lunch at two o'clock. I always left the office from half an hour to an hour later than the other girls at night, but no business organization considers this an adequate excuse.

"I don't see how anybody as intelligent as you manages to be late all the time," the office manager would say. "It may be all right for you—

but all the others want to do the same. We've got to have rules."

The exceptional employee in an office is as troublesome as the exceptional child in a primary school. After a while I ignored the little notices and everybody was happier.

Cushman's, where often we went for lunch, was a bakery on Fourth Avenue. For twenty cents on Friday one could get fried fish, and for another five cents, coffee. With a tip this made thirty cents and was the limit of expenditure for girls who got from sixteen to eighteen dollars a week. We did not always have so substantial a luncheon; sometimes it was crackers and milk and a piece of pie, or spice cakes. At Merrill & Baker's some of us had brought our food wrapped up in a box from home. Occasionally we went to the Mary Louisa Home of the Young Women's Christian Association, where we got a good luncheon for twenty cents. And sometimes to a restaurant on Fourteenth Street, where our digestions were ravaged by a complete dinner for fifteen cents. There was another food place—it is on Forty-second Street now—whose charm for us lay in the fact that on the center of each table was a basket of assorted rolls—filling and free, with your twenty-cent luncheon.

Naturally, in all these restaurants the food was

served without any delicacy. Sometimes, desperate for a little bit of beauty, I would go to Purcell's, where one got good food, delicately served, for a high price. There I would spend seventy-five cents recklessly for an insufficient luncheon, but would come away with a certain feeling of peace. Says a poet whose name I do not know,

> "Two loaves—sell one, and with the dole
> Buy hyacinths to feed thy soul."

There were no soda-fountain luncheons in those days, and I do not remember that any of the girls ate the fantastic luncheons of ice-cream sodas and cake that are now eaten at the fountains. The old fashion of bringing from home a luncheon of sandwiches and cake seems to have disappeared. I am not attached to old ways. My weakness is always to like the new, but the little package of lunch was better than the ice-cream soda.

But neither is satisfactory. No girl wants to sit in the office by herself and eat sandwiches—a daily diet like that is indigestible. How I envied my sister, who worked for an establishment that had a kitchen for its girls, with a maid in charge to wash dishes and clear up. The girls prepared their own food—a soup or tea—things like that. Surely such an arrangement is inexpensive enough for almost any fairly large office. We all found

luncheons a trial, since we got better food at home than we were able to buy at noon. Until a girl can spend seventy-five cents a day for her luncheon, she cannot eat pleasantly and enough in New York City—and mighty few women, or men, either, ever earn enough to pay that much.

Of course, the universal single luncheon hours squeezed in between twelve and two are another trial, as all the cheaper places are packed at that time, and many a girl has to spend a little of her precious hour waiting for a table. How much better they do that in France! At twelve all the offices close and everybody disappears. They open again at two. In those two hours men and women have had time to go home and rest and eat a good meal. At two they are back, refreshed and ready for work. They work an extra hour at night, but they are not nearly so tired as we are, who do not rest at all at luncheon.

About lunches for workers, I think we are really stupid. This doesn't apply in the least to executives, who take from two to three hours a day for their leisurely eating and talking. The girl clerk dashes out at half-past twelve for a bite to eat, swallows a sandwich and coffee or a piece of cake and chocolate, or a salad. In order to be decently dressed on a slim income she has usually to do a little shopping every day, buy a collar or a yard

of silk or a sweater or a box of rouge. She hurries into a department store, lingers at some counter to look at something she cannot afford to buy, does her little errand, and comes back breathless at one-thirty. At four o'clock she has indigestion and at five she is exhausted. She gets on the subway at half-past five and arrives home too tired and too nauseated by the bad air of the subway to eat dinner.

In later years I tried to encourage my girls to stop work and have a cup of tea and a cracker at four o'clock, but it was difficult because it interfered with the workings of the rest of the office. How funny we thought it in 1905, when an English house established in New York served tea to employees and visitors at four o'clock! How barbarously we resisted with ridicule the sensible innovation!

There isn't an employer who doesn't know that he will get more work out of his people if they are not too tired. But there are some who would rather have their people tired and frightened and worried, even if that means less actual work. To these being boss is a sadistic delight expressing itself in slave-making. It took me a long time to believe this even when it happened to myself—because I'd been filled to the brim with faith in the cool, bright perfection of American business.

I thought that all employers had sun-like smiles for ability, energy, and enthusiasm. And then I met the slave-driver, who, though he dearly loves to make money, is willing to pay in profits for the pleasure of being a ruthless boss. Such employers detest able subordinates and fire them out of their jobs with pleasure. Like all passions, this sadism is able to disregard sense as well as decency. But the average head of an American business is kind enough, especially when it is no trouble to be so.

Certainly no one in authority at J. A. Hill's was ruthless. Indeed, they leaned too far the other way and their gentle office rules were not very well enforced. The executives knew little about rest periods and other such devices, but that was due to ignorance. They were too busy with sales plans to pay active attention to their employees.

It is just beginning to dawn on most of the world that perhaps people are more important than machines, or files, or offices. But the idea that a business had better not exist at all, if its people are unhappy or underpaid is still incomprehensible jargon to most intellects. However, to those employers who would like more and better work in return for a few small improvements, I suggest:

An extra two hours once a week to each girl

for shopping—that is, from one to three o'clock in the afternoon.

Some kind of a kitchen with a maid, or if possible a cook.

An hour and a half for luncheon and an extra half hour of work at night.

Tea or fruit and an interval of ten minutes rest at half past three or four o'clock, with all the windows open.

"What old ideas!" exclaims the social worker, who has experimented and figured with the health and working capacity of employees. "We've said all that for years." You have indeed. And some offices have acted on your advice. But I have worked for a dozen companies and never in one single instance have I seen any of these ideas adopted—not even the smallest one—in any office where I was employed. And I did not stop work until December, 1924. I am hoping, quite against hope, that these old suggestions coming from me, who have been an office worker and have employed so many others, may impress some employer who distrusts theoretical knowledge.

There is this to be said for employers. They have tried some of these little ideas and found that the employees did not take to them. Employees do not like innovations. The same old way looks rather safe. There's a chance that the

new way may be better, but why take a chance? So improvements must be made gradually, perhaps given to a few as a privilege or a sort of grace, and then extended to an entire establishment.

But the experience of going home in the subway was much more trying than the luncheon trouble. Standing all the way, exhausted, a little nauseated by bad air and odors, and arriving home too tired and sick to eat—it had really an element of horror. Several years later, after the buses got going, I found that by taking half an hour longer to go home I could get there on the top of the bus and in a trolley. So I traveled that way even in snowstorms in the winter.

At about this time I began to be tired and to have nerves. For the first time since I'd had the measles, I went to a doctor, who gave me a nerve tonic. Of course the nerve tonic did not do me any good. What I should have had was a little advice about unwinding some of the nervous tension under which I worked, also a little more leisure at noon and no subway trip at night. It's so easy to get sick nerves. And it takes so many years to get over them under the best conditions.

CHAPTER XII

Other People's Pies

LIKE everybody else in the world, I felt that I was not doing what I really wanted to do. There was a stimulating business opportunity with J. A. Hill & Company, and that was more important to me than anything else at the moment. But I had two other deep-lying ambitions. To write novels was one. Deeper than that was another—the desire to do something that I called "for the good of mankind." The urge for this was as continuous and as irritating as any other unexpressed emotion, for it was an emotion and not a thought.

About this time I thought I saw a chance to express that emotion. I joined the Women's Trade Union League. This is an organization to encourage the formation of labor unions among women workers. It was then young; the road ahead of it was full of détours, ruts, signs reading, "Use at your own risk," and warning red lights. It was strewn with wrecks. The organization has gone steadily ahead on this hopeless-looking road. It still has a hard way ahead of it.

At that time it was largely supported by Mary Dreier and her sister, Mrs. Raymond Robins. Like most new movements, it was cluttered with enthusiasts who did not know how to get anything done.

One sensational victory came to the Women's Trade Union League at that time. That was the winning of the shirtwaist-workers' strike. I had an exciting time helping the strikers to picket, as did many other members of the League. It was cold work—few of us had fur coats. I do not remember now when I managed to do this picketing, but it must have been in my luncheon-time. The treatment of the strikers was outrageous. One day we were picketing outside a factory in Waverley Place, when several policemen came along and gathered at the door. I wondered why I never had seen policemen with such faces patrolling a beat. I had thought of the police largely as people who had patted my brother's golden curls when he was a baby. But these men looked different, icy cold and cynical—bad men. Very soon a young woman of about thirty came out of the factory. Her hair was too blond, her clothes were too emphatic, her eyes too blue, her manner too confident. She marched up to a little striker and said, "This is the one that hit me." The charge was so preposterous that we all thought it would

be laughed off by the police as a joke. No, indeed. Two of them seized the girl by the arms and dragged her off to the station. Three of us (members of the League) went along. I was terrified, so I became insolent and said: "It's quite enough for one of you to hold her. She won't hurt you." They made some insulting mumbling reply about minding my own business, but I suppose because my English sounded American they let go her arms and allowed her to walk to the station house between them—apparently a great concession. We all went to court as witnesses, and the League with its volunteer lawyers had a hard time keeping her off Blackwell's Island. With a great air of mercy the judge finally let her go with a fine. All of the members of the League, gathering at night, had stories like this to tell.

Most of us were sincere, but, after all, our clothes were more comfortable and our need not so great as that of the strikers. One of the members of the League was a stenographer and worked hard. Before she went to her own office at nine o'clock in the morning she would stop off downtown and help the strikers to picket—an exhausting cold thing to do before your day's work. One day she heard one striker remark to another, glancing at her, "She's had breakfast." To the strikers all of us were people apparently of wealth and

leisure. They did not like the idea of being helped. They did not feel that it was the fight of the Women's Trade Union League. After all, the League would go on if the strike were lost, but they would be out of a job.

This particular strike was brought to a close by a curious dramatic event. It did not, I suppose, win the strike in itself, but it called the attention of the newspapers to the situation, and after that their stories and exposures helped win a victory for the girls.

Miss Dreier, the head of the League in New York, was a gentle, fragile-looking woman, with a fine face and soft light hair. She dressed rather shabbily, partly, I suppose, out of indifference, but also because she did not like to be better dressed than the worker members of the unions. One day Miss Dreier was talking with a group of pickets, when the police came up and arrested her for assaulting a strike-breaker. Many of the newspaper men knew Miss Dreier—she was well-known in New York, anyway—and the thing was so absurd that it leaped to the front pages of the papers and indirectly ended the strike. The leader among the employers was the Triangle Waist Company; the hideous fire in their factory which killed so many girls came like an echo of the fight.

The League held classes to teach English to

foreign girls. In the class I taught was one Russian girl. She could speak no English when she came for the first time. She was tall and robust; her beautiful bushy red hair framed a face that was at the same time rough and refined by suffering. As the Russians themselves say, it was "badly cut, but well sewed." She hated the factory and felt intelligent enough to do something else, but had no equipment for any other work. Nobody who hasn't tried it can imagine how exhausting it is to work all day long at an uncongenial task and then spend the evening studying. Both body and brain have to be beaten to the unaccustomed work at night, and at about ten o'clock the eyes keep closing wearily. But this girl stuck it out. Her determination so appealed to me that I kept on teaching her after I stopped working for the League.

She was making twenty-one dollars a week in the shirtwaist factory. This high pay was for the making of "models"—the new designs which the other girls copy. As soon as she knew enough English, she taught herself how to operate a typewriter, and got a wretched job at eight dollars a week addressing envelopes. As the English addresses were unfamiliar to her, she was not good at this and changed employers often, working for one firm after another at eight dollars

a week or less. This meant hunger and a wretched cold room, as she was alone in this country. But she said, "I'll never go back to the factory—never!" And then, in spite of her little English, she struggled over the tricky sounds and hieroglyphs of shorthand. At last, after five years of bitter struggle, she was working as a stenographer in the Middle West and making fifteen dollars a week. Whether she ever did any better I do not know. Perhaps the struggle was worth while. I doubt it. She had to get out of the factory—she had a good mind which had nothing to exercise on in that long daily monotony. But if she had not been ridden by our false ideals of the superiority of office work, she might have turned to something more suitable and worth while.

There was another shirtwaist striker who had a similar experience, but who solved her riddle better. She was a young thing, only nineteen, pretty and courageous. Hungarian—with only a few English words—she also decided that her goal was the stenographer's desk. First she had to learn English, then spelling and grammar, then the complicated shorthand systems, and on top of all that, the strange habits of American business offices. She struggled on for about seven years, in the course of which she entered college and acquired an education. But she never was

enough at ease in the English language to compete with an American stenographer. After seven years she saw how foolish she had been. She gave up the whole office thing and specialized in domestic science, and is doing well—very well.

Besides the picketing and the school, the League had many other activities in which a practical person like myself could be of use. There were parades to be organized and circulars to be written and funds to be raised, and once the League tried to build a co-operative business. For a while we ran an excellent restaurant, which was a god-send to the clerks of the neighborhood. In all these activities I took a tiny, subordinate part. Most of the volunteers at the League were able to give it their whole time or were labor-union officials.

To me there was continual irritation in the thought that as a member of the League I was interfering in the affairs of labor unions, which were, after all, not my concern. I meant to be helpful, of course, and so did all the members of the League, but every time I had anything to do with the actual labor unions there was a sensation of sticking my finger in somebody else's pie. I felt too dreadfully like the prosperous, befurred lady of fashion in the novels of the 'sixties, who brought a basket to the poor. There was dangerously too much satisfaction to me and too little

to the people with whom I was dealing. Also, I was not prepared to join a stenographers' union. This made me feel out of place and insincere. Certainly it did not seem to me that I was useful enough to pay for the physical exhaustion that came from this extra work. So I gave it up.

Instead I tried to improve myself by an extension course in French at Columbia University, but that also didn't work out. At night, after seeing so many people all day, I needed to be alone. So I went back to the privacy of books. About that time I read Henry George for the first time. I had grown up in a radical household. But at twenty, with the natural rebellion of children against their father's generation, and with my new respect for business (I believed all its lies), I had become conservative. Oh, very much of a conservative!

Progress and Poverty turned my mind once more toward the left, this time as a logical, reasoned-out position, not as a childish credulity. But I went much further to the left than Henry George, and have been going on in that direction ever since.

A little later the New York *Call* was started, and this helped revive my own interest in socialism. . . . It was not much that I could do for the newspaper, as I had little time and less money.

But is was possible to distribute literature—write a circular—address a labor-union meeting for subscriptions.

In the woman suffrage movement I took no active interest. I don't know why this was, exactly, although I can give you a number of reasons. I am not much of a joiner and do not work well in clubs and committees. Of course, I thought women should have the vote; that had been settled in my mind when I was twelve years old. At eighteen I had been a violent suffragist. At twenty-five it was not a matter of great importance. The fight was too nearly won. Besides, it seemed to me that organizations and speech-making were not going to bring about suffrage for women, though they might focus attention on it. The vote would come, I thought, when women had advanced economically far enough to make it necessary. And that time was at hand.

I always knew it would make no great political difference. Votes and parties are not made by talk, but grow out of the circumstances in which we live. The woman is influenced by the same surroundings as her husband or brother. There are a few altruistic, thoughtful people who vote unselfishly regardless of their surroundings, but the number of such people is always small. The working-woman would vote the Socialist ticket,

it seemed to me, when she and her family were miserable enough and hopeless enough to drive home the uselessness of anything else. And at the same time her husband, influenced by the same causes, would vote it too.

A woman does not vote the Democratic ticket because her husband does, nor the Republican ticket because her father did. She votes the Democratic ticket for the same reasons that her husband votes it; she votes the Republican ticket for the same reasons that made her father vote it. She is surrounded by the same influences, the same kind of education, the same sort of propaganda, and the same living conditions.

I thought that child-labor laws and birth control were needed more than the vote for women. I felt that the wife of the mill-owner would fight child-labor laws as ardently as her husband. And equally that the tired, stupid mother of profitable children in the mills would resent the loss of income from her children as much as would their father. I wanted the women to win, because the idea seemed so sensible and just, but I could not get excited about it. But I could be roused to angry support of the movement, when a man or —worse—a woman argued that women were too fine to vote. I marched in one suffrage parade

and I believe I wrote a circular for one of the suffrage organizations.

Needless to say the girls in the offices in which I worked from 1902 to 1909 were nearly all opposed to woman suffrage. Occasionally a Jewish girl would want it, but even that was rare. About 1909 the women began to change. In a few years the desire for the vote was nearly universal with them. That desire was focused by the suffrage propaganda, but it grew exactly as grew the self-respect of the women who worked. Their wages went up before the wish for suffrage came, not afterward. The stenographer getting thirty dollars a week was indignant at the idea that politically she didn't have as much sense as the boy who wrapped bundles for her at fifteen dollars a week.

I had the feeling that the suffrage organizations were made up of women of leisure and wealth, and I did not see where we working-women fitted into them. This was a common feeling among women in offices, and I think partly accounted for their slowness in coming around to suffrage.

Also, I was repelled by the sex antagonism expressed by so many of the earlier suffrage workers; and all the other girls with their beaux disliked that even more than I did.

The girls in offices did not consider themselves

working-women; they "went to business." And they neither wanted to be condescended to by "society" women taking up suffrage, nor did they want for a moment to be classed with the members of labor unions. They had the white-collar feeling completely, and they thought themselves independent and ladies. Some years ago an Englishman named Newton wrote a novel called *A Young Lady*. It is apparently the only good book he ever wrote, but it is the best picture of the stenographer of that day and her ladylikeness that I have ever seen. The girls don't seem to be quite so silly any more, though they are still foolish enough about such nonsense.

Still, how can you expect them to be any different? They live by the standards of the whole western world, which looks down on them because they work for a living. If they were women of education working for a living, this condescension would be less. If they were women of wealth working for fun, it would not exist at all. So naturally they pretend to both education and wealth.

Since the time of Eunice Johns, I had had no friend among them—indeed I had no women friends at all. There seemed to be some interesting women at the Trade Union League, but they were very earnest. And besides, I was shy and

uncertain of my own knowledge and opinions and afraid to talk. It was a rather lonely mental life, though I knew many friendly people. Now that I think of it, the women I have known so well in these last fifteen years I met outside of offices, although most of them have been business women.

And men tell me that in their offices they find no one who speaks the language of imagination and dreams. Yet business in America is filled with people who have been formally educated. The education does not take in the United States most of the time, I suppose because all sorts of people are exposed to it who don't want it and because there's no glory in knowing anything outside of business after you leave college. There have usually been in each office in which I have worked one or two men who had intellectual interests outside of their work. They were never the heads of the business, and seldom had important positions, and that, of course, made culture a danger signal to the bright young man beginning his career.

Since fancy and dreams and culture are not good business, it is the habit of most people in offices to hide them. I have worked for years for the same company with some man who had sympathies and ideas like my own and yet never found it out until

long afterward, when I met him somewhere far from the office.

At the Hill Company, W. E. W. was intellectual enough to supply mental stimulus to four or five organizations. His passionate interest in reality, in ideas, in beauty, combined with his rich sense of fun, made the office vivid. Something new was discovered or appreciated or laughed at every day. It might have to do with our business, or it might be a new poet or a new mathematical conception, or a wild piece of nonsense hidden away in the morning paper, or Bewick's *Quadrupeds* discovered in an old bookstore, or a new insight into the character of one of our people. There is always a joyous mental activity of some kind about him.

For part of the time I shared an office with Arthur B. Reeve. He was then working on some kind of history, was on the staff of the *Survey* and occasionally wrote serious articles on economics. By this hard and varied activity he managed to earn about twenty dollars a week. And then one day he wrote a detective story about Craig Kennedy, and since then he has sold these tales for years at high prices. Intellect doesn't pay. Then why waste effort on it which might go into the making of more money?

CHAPTER XIII

Translated into the Feminine

WHILE I was with J. A. Hill & Company the mail-order book business all over the United States began to slide slowly and steadily into one of those abysses in which all the final figures on its financial statements were in red. When general business is rather bad the mail-order selling of books is apt to be good. Our guess was that people did not care about going out and spending money for clothes and gayety; they felt serious and stayed at home and read books. So, on the other hand, years of business boom were often bad years for us. But 1907 brought one of the worst panics that ever came upon the United States. In a panic year people have no money at all to spend and the book business goes down with most of its brothers.

A mail-order book enterprise is peculiar in that it can be started and stopped at any time. It does not have connections running out to other firms that force it to keep going in bad years. If business is bad, advertising is stopped, the desks are closed, the chairs become empty, the files get dusty and circulars cease to fly into the mails.

A year and a half before, W. E. W. had left The Hill Company to enter a new business, but I had stayed on. Never after that did my husband and I have any business contact or relation, though for some years we were both in the advertising business.

In the bad year 1907 and the spring of 1908 the mail-order book business at Hill's fell to pieces. I had little to do, and began to look about for something to fill my spare time. It was possible to do the little work that remained at Hill's in an hour or two a day, and the rest of the time I spent gossiping with the young advertising representatives of the magazines who would drop in to persuade us to spend money in those dry, unprofitable times. Some of them became my good friends. They were young and I was young.

In the course of idle talk one of them told me once that the *Review of Reviews* wanted some one to write advertising copy and that I was the person to do it. That is how I happened one day to go into a certain big, cluttered, crowded office on Waverly Place. In this simple way began the most important business association I have ever had, both in itself and in what it brought me. The acquaintance began rather absurdly. Mr. Stone, general manager of the *Review of Reviews*, asked me to write two advertisements, each to occupy a

page in the magazines. One was about a "Library of Poetry," and the other about a set of Dumas. I happened to run across Darwin's statement that if he had had his life to live over, he would give an hour a day to reading poetry. This gave me a beautiful beginning for an advertisement about the collection of verse. Mr. Stone was enthusiastic when he saw the copy.

"They're fine," he declared. "How much do we owe you?"

"Goodness! I don't know. That's up to you. I've never done anything like this before—just one or two advertisements. I've always worked by the week."

"But you must know," he insisted. "We haven't had anything done just this way, either. I don't know how to pay for piece work."

Oh, the baffling problem of fixing a price—the fear of asking too much . . . the dread of asking too little!

"Well," I finally brought out, hesitatingly, "how would fifteen dollars do?"

"For both?" He was astonished.

"Yes."

"My dear child, I can't pay you so little. It's ridiculous. You'd starve to death at that rate of pay." And he gave me a check for a more reasonable figure.

I have never ceased to be grateful to Mr. Stone for that bit of consideration, and I don't think I have ever since made the mistake of asking too little money.

The last circular which I wrote on such a basis for anyone was for *Hearst's Magazine* and the price was a thousand dollars. Of course by that time I had added some fifteen years to my former experience. By "on such a basis," I mean that it is unusual to write just one circular for a concern. Usually one does all the work of a customer for at least a year.

It is a mistake to suppose that business houses object to giving high prices for work. Most people have no real standards of judgment about anything, and they can only guess at value by price. If your work is expensive, they take it for granted that it is good.

There is also a certain pride in paying a lot of money. We have all heard business men make remarks like this: "Oh sure! We hire So-and-so to do our advertising—the highest-priced man in the business, but he's worth it." But none of this should be taken as a piece of advice. How much to charge is one of the most delicate and difficult problems in the business world. There seems to be a sort of instinct about it. The person without this instinct—what we call an impractical person

—almost invariably charges either too little or too much. There is a physician in New York whose charges are usually too low. Suddenly he will realize that he is not a money-maker, and then for a while his rates are fantastically high, thus turning away patients who have clung to him because his bills were small.

Years after my experience with Mr. Stone, there came to me a young man, something of a poet, who not only lacked ability to value his product in terms of money, but was proud of the lack. He had written occasional copy for me and badly needed a regular job. One of our customers in the Middle West had asked us to find a man to edit a house organ. The young near poet seemed just the person to do it, and he himself liked the idea.

"What salary do you want?" I asked him. "That will be their first question about you."

"Oh, twenty-five dollars a week," he replied.

"That won't do," I told him. "If you ask only twenty-five they'll think you're not good enough. Ask fifty."

"My dear madam"—the young poet's eyes were bright with anger—"I know how much money I should ask! I really need no help in that matter."

"All right," I said. "We'll let it go at that."

I did not recommend him for the job. Such a

young man would have stayed about a week with an automobile manufacturer of the Middle West, who knew nothing of poets and their ways.

If you are an impractical person, don't trust your own judgment about what salary to ask or what prices to charge—that, I suppose, is the moral of this tale.

I continued writing stray circulars for the *Review of Reviews*, department stores, and advertising agencies for several years. But meantime my department at J. A. Hill & Company gave out altogether. It is nearly impossible for a beginner to earn a living at free-lance work in advertising. So I looked about for another job.

I was tired of the mail-order book business. But I couldn't pick and choose. Working-people seldom can, since one week out of work is likely to be a disaster. Fortunately I did get into a fresh field, where I learned much that was new to me about business . . . and more about the handling of myself. I was engaged to run a semi-editorial department for the *Woman's Home Companion*. In one week I knew that this job would not hold me long, but I felt it necessary to organize the department and start it on the way to success before leaving. The work itself soon became easy and so uninteresting.

Many subscriptions for magazines are secured by

agents—both men and women—who make a living in this arduous way. It is hard, not because there is no demand for the magazines, but because so many people are trying to sell them and because each sale is so small. It takes almost as much ability to get an order for a magazine for a year at three dollars as it does to sell a jeweled watch. And it takes more ability than is required to sell a ten-thousand-dollar order for cotton sheeting, since the sheeting is a necessity. The only things harder to sell than magazines are life insurance and books.

Besides those who make a living by selling magazines, there are women whose friends occasionally take a subscription as a favor. If they were called agents these women would refuse to sell such subscriptions. The *Ladies' Home Journal* had the clever idea of organizing a special department for them. Instead of calling it a department, they named it "The Girls' Club"; instead of calling the women agents, they called them "Members of the Girls' Club." Instead of having them work frankly just for money, the magazine paid for the subscriptions partly in money and partly in gifts. The "Members of the Club" are paid just as much in the long run as regular agents. It is their affair if they prefer to do the thing in a sentimental manner. Occasionally one of the

women drops all the sweetness and becomes a regular agent.

The *Woman's Home Companion* engaged me to organize a similar "club," and later I started one for *Pictorial Review.* Most of the big women's magazines now have them—they are much liked by the readers.

But I did not know anything about women's magazines the day I went with a letter of introduction to the *Woman's Home Companion.* All I knew then was that I needed a job, and that it would be a good idea to learn to write for women. In my hand was a little portfolio of sample advertisements which I had written for J. A. Hill and the *Review of Reviews;* in my heart was the usual trembling shrinking from new people; in my mind excited curiosity. I laid down my specimens on the desk of the director of circulation.

"It looks *very* good indeed"—he was a *very* courteous man—"but isn't it a little different from what we shall need?"

I realized at once that it was, not a little different, but altogether the wrong sort of advertising for a woman's magazine. My early advertising about books was bullet-like in directness and addressed entirely to men. It was raucous, overemphatic, and full of superlatives. I had never written a word of advertising copy to women.

I was fumbling about for something to reply. But I couldn't bear to have that appear. So I answered quickly and alertly:

"But because I've written only this kind of advertising is no reason that I can't do any other. Wouldn't it be a good idea to have me write a sample advertisement for you, just to fit your proposition? If it's wrong we can just forget about it; if it's right you can consider me further for the job."

He was a cautious business man and he was pleased with this idea. He did not like jumping in the dark. He did not want me to take a chance, either, so he said,

"But do you think you ought to do all that hard work just on speculation?"

"There's nothing I'd like better," came back the cheerful reply—which was not exactly true. I did not in the least like to do a lot of hard work and perhaps get nothing for it.

The sample to be written was a two-column advertisement which was to look and read like an article in the magazine. Carefully first I studied the editorial columns of the *Woman's Home Companion.* Then I tried to imitate their style. I could not. It was too gentle and soft and words were used too loosely. In handling words in such a style one gets the feeling of contact with some-

thing smooth and round and slippery. Ideas slide off, slip away, and disappear. Women's magazines are often written in this fashion so exasperating to one who writes advertising to be paid for at one hundred and sixty-eight dollars an inch in those same magazines. In the advertisements, every word has to be weighed. When you pay twelve thousand dollars for one page to appear in one magazine one time, your words are made of radium to you. Copywriters whom I engaged later from the editorial departments of women's magazines always irritated me by their indifference to the exact meanings and values of words.

Anyway, I found it impossible to write in that soft-pedal way. So I tried another scheme. I wrote the sample advertisement exactly in the same manner as the book copy. Then sentence by sentence, word by word, I softened it, sweetened it, made it sticky with sugar. Whenever I thought it was needed, I stuck in a *cute* word.

When this sample advertisement was finished, it was really a translation from the harsh masculine style of mail-order book copy to the gentle feminity of its prospective readers. But I did keep it clear and definite. In later years much experience with advertising to women has proved that while they like to be approached softly and cleverly, they really demand even more definite-

ness than men. They want facts, provided the facts are stated simply and gently.

When I had made my translations I read carefully the *Ladies' Home Journal* and saw how they had handled a similar club. Their club was impersonal. It had no president, no rules, no secrets. So I improved on it. Our club had a president. Her name was Margaret Clarke and her picture appeared on all our printed matter. Our circulars and letters were written in friendly fashion—never did we use business phraseology. We called ours the Pin Money Club and devised rules for it. The members worked only for pin money, which is more polite and nice than just plain, coarse money. We also organized something we called "The Inner Circle." Only girls (all members were considered girls regardless of age) who had secured twenty-five subscriptions were entitled to initiation in this arcanum. Each of them received a little gold brooch with a tiny diamond. Let no man dare laugh at this mumbo jumbo . . . let him look on Masons and Elks and then remember that at least these women got about fifteen dollars in actual cash and a little gold brooch with their nonsense.

When I organized a similar club for *Pictorial Review*, my imagination grew fantastic. I called it the "Daughters of the Golden Treasure," and

raised three degrees through which members could mount to the secret chambers of the "Order of the Pearl," the entrance fee being twenty-five subscriptions and the reward of privilege a pearl ring, the ring symbolizing the closed and exclusive nature of that selected group. My mind enjoyed acrobatics—the thinking up of new ideas, the building of something—even though that something was absurd. Many of the members realized it was all chatter, but even these liked the little game we were playing.

It was not so much in the big cities that we found our members, or even on the farms, but in small towns, where it was hard to earn a little extra money. Some of the women desperately needed the little game. Their lives seemed bare of pleasure as of money. To such a person a dollar brought independence, which she proved to herself by buying something foolish. All her life she had had to ask some man for every cent and to spend it carefully. So the few dollars she earned through the Pin Money Club she threw recklessly away, much in the spirit of a little child who says, "I don't care what you say, I'm going to do it just for spite."

We sent the members gifts from time to time in part payment for the subscriptions. It was startling to see the delight they got from a half-tone

portrait of Maude Adams or a few Christmas cards. The lives of most of them were so starved for æsthetic satisfaction that a box of good plain writing paper brought back to us letters bubbling with joy. The gifts had to be in good taste. The natural taste of most of these women was not bad. Money was what they lacked.

The head of the chinaware department of Sears, Roebuck once told me that when the women on the farms order china by mail, they nearly always demand pink, which sounds so cheerful in description. But when they come to headquarters in Chicago they buy blue. He said it was not taste they lacked, but trained visual imagination.

There were well-to-do members, and these usually got the most subscriptions, because their friends had the most money to spend on magazines.

Many of the women were lonely or troubled about something, and they had no one to talk to frankly except the stranger in New York whose picture appeared in their favorite magazine. One wrote to me from Arkansas:

Dear Margaret Clarke:

I hope you'll not mind my writing you this way—you a stranger and away off in New York. But when I look at your sweet face I feel as though I had known you always. People around here think I'm queer. I don't think I'm so

queer . . . do you think it's queer to like pretty things? I have that picture of Maude Adams hanging on the wall and you can't think how much company it is to me, living alone like I do. I like doing the work for the Pin Money Club. It just takes me around seeing new people all the time. I suppose I ought to be ashamed to say it, but I like the new faces better than the old ones. So you see how much you have done for me.

But of what help could I be to another woman in a little town in Missouri?

Dear Miss Clarke:

I have a terrible problem before me. I can't bear to talk about it to the people I know because they'd think badly of my husband, and I don't want them to; but perhaps you in New York with all the wise editors of the magazine, could tell me what to do. My husband works hard and is well thought of. We have three children and I don't think he is kind to them. He is very harsh and strict and beats them for any little disobedience. Now I don't think that's the way to bring up children, because I can see how he makes them obstinate and worse than before. But when I object he says that I'm not doing my duty as a wife. Now, Miss Clarke, what shall I do? Last week I was so desperate I actually almost thought once of getting a divorce. But of course I can't do that. That would be worse for my children than standing things.

I'm sending you three subscriptions. I'm sorry I can't send more, but I've been so worried lately I didn't have the heart to get any.

There were few as disturbing as this. More of them read like this from a girl in Minneapolis:

DEAR MARGARET CLARKE:

I have just been engaged to be married and I want to have a nice party. Will you please tell me how to do it?

And a letter from the same girl a month later:

Oh, you dear, nice Margaret Clarke, I wish you could have been here last week! We had the loveliest time. So many good things to eat. . . . All my friends were here . . . and every single thing at the party was paid for by money I earned in the Pin Money Club. [She had earned three dollars.]

Or this one:

DEAR MARGARET CLARKE:

I wish you could have seen me in my wedding gown. You would have been so pleased because it was fastened by the little brooch of the Inner Circle that I earned through you.

The girls who wrote the most letters and were the most enthusiastic got the fewest subscriptions. The women who made money wrote briefly and in a business-like way.

Every department of a woman's magazine gets letters like this. For the unhappy woman, there

is little one can do except to write a kind and careful letter. If she feels that some one is listening to whom she can talk freely, that another woman is spiritually holding her hand, life becomes a little easier. Most difficulties seem simpler if they can be talked about! Women with bitter, hard lives who are able to talk of their sorrows to some one—to a priest or a god or a psycho-analyst or just a person—thereby manage to bear them without getting sick. The women . . . and men . . . who break down or go mad are those who are unable to unburden themselves.

To one desperate woman I wrote one day:

> If you have no one to talk to, get a pile of paper and a fountain pen, and write a long letter pouring forth fully and freely what you have bottled up. Write anything—no matter how shocking or disgraceful it may sound. Then tear the letter up and throw it away. The relief will be immense.

We learned something about women from a prize contest,—that under that competitive spur they do not act in the least like men. With men contests for the largest number of subscriptions are always successful. The prizes are sometimes money and sometimes things like cameras or traveling bags. Boys love to fight for a pony. So we assumed that a similar contest would be liked by women . . . and we were wrong.

We offered a glittering trip to New York, with ladylike and expensive entertainment there for two weeks, to the four women who would get the most subscriptions. The jaunt as planned was enticing, but even so, we said that if the winner did not have time to make the journey, she would receive a handsome money prize instead. All this in addition to the regular commissions in cash and gifts. Four prizes were offered. Out of the thousands of women who had "joined the club," exactly four competed, and naturally these four won. So to the novelist and the advertising man and the preacher I offer this discovery—that women as a rule dislike contests. They prefer to work or to think or to live for a definite reward.

In this I think they display the feeling for reality which often distinguishes a woman's mind from a man's. I myself cannot resist a contest. I have always been stimulated to do my best by rivalry, whether at school or work or play, yet I think contests are silly and even vicious. They call upon vanity, they use up nerve force rather than normal energy, and they train the mind to showiness rather than to accomplishment. Our American love of contests, of beating the other fellow, so bewildering to older civilizations, is not a glorious quality. Think of proposing a contest to Kant, or to Bach, or to Tolstoi!

CHAPTER XIV

I Walk More Softly

AT the *Woman's Home Companion* my work was explained at the beginning. Usually, as I found at Merrill & Baker's, you are allowed to wander in a fog until your natural intelligence, like the sun, clears up mysteries, or, more often, like the moon, dims them forever in a haze. There are people who work for years, going from one place to another, and who seem only to get more muddled as time goes on—until at sixty, bookkeepers all their lives, they are unable to keep a set of books. I shall never forget the slow graying of one man's face as day after day he saw his job slipping away from him. No one has ever explained anything to these people. They have been thrown into the bewildering mysteries of new offices over and over again, and before they can fight their way to an understanding they are pushed into a new tangle. But who is to tell them what to do? Few people know how to explain anything. Unfortunate is he who asks directions on a road, or who tries to discover the principles of a political party from a politician,

or the secrets of a new language from a native—who wants to learn from an artist the theory behind "mixed planes," or from a writer the inspiration of Miss Gertrude Stein.

On your first day in a new office you might say to some young man who had worked there for four or five years, "Who is that man walking down the aisle?"

"Oh, that's Mr. Green."

"What does he do?"

"Well, he O. K.'s the orders."

"What orders?"

"Well, if you want a pencil or a pad."

"If I want to order printing or booklets—does he O. K. that?"

"Well, sometimes he does."

"When does he?"

"Oh, I don't know. It just depends."

This vagueness is partly due to the muddle-headedness of the person directing you, but also it comes about because people's duties in offices are seldom clearly defined. When you are engaged on a new job you think your employer knows what he expects you to do. But he seldom does know exactly. Nearly always you make your own job. Nobody knows just what you ought to do and ought not to do—everybody is a little bit mixed up; there are no definite lines of work.

Authority is not clearly defined. Here's a man who seems to be only the chief comptroller—you find that gradually he has assumed charge of personnel and everybody accepts his orders with a certain relief. Let him have the bother if he wants it. Some girl in the editorial department who is supposed to write on fashions is inexplicably and mysteriously urging children to get subscriptions for the magazine. The editor-in-chief suddenly turns out to be in charge of circulation, while the business manager writes editorials, and another editor makes speeches at banquets.

But my own job at the *Woman's Home Companion* was explained to me clearly and definitely at once. At the very beginning the *Companion* sent me to Springfield, Ohio, to the plant to learn the "works."

It was my first trip overnight on a train. I did not in the least know how to act on a Pullman sleeper, but my brother, a traveling salesman, had carefully instructed me. I was shocked by the berths, and am still shocked by them. How indecent they are . . . how they horrify the supposedly "indecent" Parisian! After all, a Frenchman kissing his girl in a Paris restaurant is a much more agreeable sight than his American equal walking down the aisle of a Pullman any morning.

I don't remember much that I learned at

Springfield except the quality of the food dispensed at the main hotel. It was the sort that makes the traveling salesman dust off his plate at the Waldorf and misanthropically eat boiled eggs at the Ritz.

The first day I received chops fried in lard, and something called coffee. Having spent the night struggling with these impolite subterfuges for food, next day I subsisted on chocolate and dry toast. The dry toast being served swimming in grease, the following day's problem was simple. No food was desired. The fourth day I took the Interurban to Dayton for dinner, and the fifth day saw me on my way home, though I had been supposed to stay a week.

But in those few days in Springfield began a series of battles which used up much of my time with the Pin Money Club.

"Battles!" you say in surprise—you who have never worked in a big office. You think perhaps that business houses are carefully organized, that everybody in them is working for the same object—profits for the company—so that all work hand in hand, like "one big family." The bigger the office the less likely is this to be. There are some which are run with sense and harmony. Later the *Woman's Home Companion* became a more harmonious organization. But in 1908 how

everybody seemed to hate everybody else! On many magazines the editorial department has a contempt for the business department, which it considers inferior in intellect, but which makes more money. The business department usually accepts this assumption about the quality of its mind, and this makes it cocky and irritable toward the editorial department. There was a little friction between the editors and myself because they resented (as they should have done) my advertisement, which appeared each month in the magazine as editorial matter.

During my very first week I had managed to acquire the dislike of the manager of the plant in Springfield because I did not appear at the office until eleven o'clock each morning during my few days out there. This caused confusion in our dealings with each other during the whole of my stay with the magazine, and made everything more difficult and complicated.

Then battles arose because I had not learned to sail a boat in the gentle seas of a woman's magazine. But the worst of them was due to no act of mine. Nearly everybody in the place was more or less at war with the silly, officious office manager. He was little and round and excited. He puffed and quarreled and beguiled and backbit . . . all with the idea of making himself the great-

est of office managers and so getting promotion. And he caused enough friction to use up a considerable amount of the profits figured on so carefully in the business office. He had only a little wheel to tend and the *Companion* was a lusty machine. But what is the good of figuring on profits and percentages with long sheets of paper and formal words like Accounts Receivable, Deferred Charges, and Quick Assets, when all the time profits are dribbling out through the stupidity of this or that nincompoop?

Unfortunately, this little man had in his power the job . . . and therefore the fate of each of some thirty clerks and stenographers. The gossip was that quietly he was discharging the Jewish and Protestant girls who worked for him and substituting Irish girls. I don't know. It did look a little that way. But it may have been just an accident. At any rate, this is the only time I have in my own experience seen such a tendency in a Catholic executive. The heads of the magazine happened all to be Protestants . . . as are most people, after all, in the United States . . . and they had no inkling of any such activity. And nobody told them.

Anyway, the little wretch took a particular dislike to Miss Bredello, my secretary, who had come with me from J. A. Hill & Company. She was

pretty, good-natured, half Irish, half Italian, and highly competent. I don't remember whether she was Catholic or not. In six months she was doing most of the work of the Pin Money Club, while I thought up ideas and fought the department's battles. Perhaps the little man's dislike was for me rather than for her. Not quite daring to fight me openly, he devoted himself to small and mean tricks. In the morning when Miss Bredello got there, she would find all the desks shifted around in impossible ways. Or a chair had disappeared, or a pile of letters lay scattered on the floor. This delayed and confused our work. When we were employing a number of girls and the mail brought ten thousand letters each month, this confusion was likely to be serious. And when extra help or an extra dispensation of any kind was needed, how difficult he made it!

It would seem natural to take these complaints at once to the head of my department. But one dislikes to be a "trouble maker," to be a teller of tales of woe. I knew that the circulation manager liked peace and that he himself had a suave ability for avoiding rows. Besides, I liked to do my own fighting.

Perhaps this office manager was not really a mean person at all; he may just have been unfitted for his job. People are always insubordinate un-

der a poor executive. Not knowing how to handle his staff, unable to keep order, he turned to meanness and bullying. Not long after this he gave up his position in the office and became a salesman. As a salesman his record was creditable.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the confusion caused by this little office manager at the *Woman's Home Companion* was that nobody in authority discovered it for such a long time. I happened upon something of the same kind in the Wanamaker stores. In some way or other it came about—I have forgotten how—that I was engaged to prepare a book for John Wanamaker, describing the New York store. The work was done at the command of an executive there—let us call him Mr. Barry—a man with vague eyes and a pleasant manner. He was supposed to be starting a new department for John Wanamaker. He talked and talked and talked; he was full of plans. Kubla Khan could not outbuild him in palaces of air. Into the writing of the book he ordered I put an enormous amount of earnestness, working often until two o'clock in the morning. The book, when finished, was not bad. It pleased Barry, and he asked for a bill, saying that he would pay me fifty dollars, a pretty low price for the job, but much money to me. Weeks went by and the bill was unpaid. My letters were unanswered, telephone

calls brought excuses—but no money appeared. At last I wrote to Mr. Wanamaker himself, although I was rather scared to do so, because he seemed too important for any human contact. By return mail came the check and a letter of apology. Next day a friend employed in the store told me what had happened. Mr. Wanamaker had sent a secretary to demand an explanation. Barry declared to this man that he had never received any bill and that no money was due me. Through a general confusion in his records he had spent more money in his department than he was allowed. He thought me so insignificant that my claim might be buried, thus decreasing by fifty dollars the many thousands that he had overspent. The question from Mr. Wanamaker threw him into a panic and he hastily tore my bill in two and threw it into the waste basket. But the secretary happened to see the movement and demanded the torn pieces of paper.

Barry lost his job because this action was clearly a symptom of something even more deeply muddled. It took the company a good year to straighten out the mess this employee had made. A Mr. Bunn was engaged from Sears, Roebuck & Co., to establish a real mail-order department, and I believe that after months of trying to find a way through the morass of records that Barry had

left, he finally threw out the whole accumulation of figures, papers, cards, lists, memoranda, books, files—and then began all over again.

Now what made John Wanamaker hire this man in the first place, and what made the *Woman's Home Companion* put the little round man in charge of its office? In twenty years of work the most amazing thing I saw was the persistent placing of people in the wrong work. Hiring is done without sense or reason, but by whim and fancy—and usually by people who do not understand others.

The cultivation of prejudice is a science. Advertising accounts are given out because two men play golf together; and salesmen study the liquor-drinking habits of their customers in order to sell them goods. Many firms do have elaborate questionnaires and demand letters of reference, but these are of little help.

Hiring the right people for the right job is hard. It needs a person who understands others, not merely thoroughly but quickly; who knows the motives of human action; has imagination, experience and intuition, and knows the needs of the business with which he is associated.

There was no such genius at the *Woman's Home Companion,* so the little office manager continued to create much confusion. If he caused

everybody else in the place as much extra work as he caused me, the loss must have been considerable.

If I had liked my work these little disputes would have passed unnoticed or I should have fought them through. But the whole job, its work, its atmosphere—all bored me. So little annoyances became big ones.

There is in me an exasperating something which makes it hard to let go of a thing once I decide to have it. Even though intelligence says I no longer want it, still emotionally I cannot help trying to get it. Many a time I have argued and fought with myself to give up something in which I had set my teeth, and been unable to let go. This sort of unreasoning and stupid determination makes one go on struggling for things without any other real reason. One starts with a dream, a desire; then comes determination, then disillusion; and still one goes on like some unthinking machine to realize the no longer alluring dream.

This emotional determination kept pushing me into situations and conquests which were repellent to my intellect.

But after a year and a half I got another job and left. It had been a year and a half of the severest

self-discipline. I am naturally a fighter. My instinct in any difficulty is always to fight. Many times that has been helpful. Occasionally it has been disastrous. But there are so many ways to fight. When I was a little girl I threw a wooden spoon at my sister and smashed a window; and once I fought another girl on the street with hair-pulling and scratching. These were satisfactory performances at the moment, but the humiliation which followed lasted for years. When I grew up, my methods of fighting while less rough, were still very direct and outspoken.

At the *Woman's Home Companion* I learned more adroit ways of fighting. I learned occasionally to put that fighting instinct on ice. I learned to walk more softly, to use tact instead of force, and not to blurt out what I thought. Much mental torture and disillusion showed me the small commercial value of frankness. The office required a gentler touch than I had been accustomed to. The methods at the various book-publishing houses had been sometimes rough, but always frank and direct. Here everything was gentle, indirect, pleasant, soft—and there was an iron fist under the softness. I did not in the least understand these new ways. In the other offices, if the boss did not like your copy he said, "For God's sake, you know we can't say a thing like

that! Why do you waste your time doing it? Do you think, young woman, that you'd like to spend fourteen dollars an inch of your own money on all these good-looking empty words? Where's the punch—this is as flabby as an old apple?"—but always with a grin. We did our work smiling. We made fun of ourselves—our work—our copy—our books—our firm—our lives.

But here at the *Woman's Home Companion* everything was serious. Nobody ever spoke lightly of the magazine—or of anything else. They made the most humorless group of people, as a whole, I have ever worked with in my life. At first I sometimes made little jokes about the magazine, about subscriptions and editorials, but they were received either with bewilderment or coldness. I soon gave it up and kept my jokes for outside consumption.

Everybody at the *Companion* was much more courteous than the people I had worked with before. There was one editor, for instance, who was very obliging. She said good morning to you with an air of doing you a favor—of taking vast trouble with bursting enthusiasm.

Nobody ever said, "This copy is no good," but, "This is a remarkably fine piece of work, but don't you think it would be better if you substituted the word 'chatty' for 'garrulous,'" or, "I wonder

if it wouldn't be a good idea to put this second sentence first. What would you say to that?" until in some gentle unperceived fashion it came about that not one bit of my word structure lay in its original place.

It is annoying to me to this day to hear comments like, "This is good, but don't you think—" or, "This is good, but do you really think it will accomplish its purpose?"

I always want to answer, "Why do you suppose I wrote it except that I thought it would accomplish its purpose?" I have been known to make that sort of answer, but these eighteen months of the Pin Money Club taught me to make a softer one. I was homesick for the rougher methods I had known. To-day those who have worked for me charge me with being equally gentle at times in my criticisms. I refuse to believe myself guilty.

I am not suited for work on a woman's magazine. Many women are not. One of our most famous women authors, much read by women, was secured as editor-in-chief by one of the largest women's magazines. They were proud of the achievement and advertised it heavily. She arrived on the first day full of energy and ideas, sat down at the new flower-laden desk in her beautiful office, and lighted a cigarette—

all ready for work. Her famous predecessor, now one of the owners of the magazine, came in to welcome her in the manner which her reputation and position deserved. He stopped short in the doorway.

"My dear Mrs. ——, er-er-you know-er-we have a feeling here about women smoking. The reputation of this magazine—you know what it is. Really I-I wonder if you'd mind not smoking in the office while you are with us?"

"That's too bad. You see, I can't work without smoking. I'm afraid I'm not fitted for association with you at all. Good-by."

She rose and walked out. She had held the job just ten minutes.

CHAPTER XV

Who Was There That You Knew?

ONE day, while I was at the *Woman's Home Companion,* I received a telephone call from Mr. Stone. The *Review of Reviews* had been looking around for an original idea for a set of books. I was helping in the search because I was to have a chance to do the advertising. Mr. Stone told me that something promising had turned up in Springfield, Massachusetts, and asked if I would go up there with him the next morning to investigate.

Of course I could go to Springfield; there was a holiday air about the expedition; I was as excited over the new find—whatever it was—as if I had made it myself. It was arranged that we were to go and come in one day, and that I was to meet him at the station the next morning.

The Grand Central Station at seven thirty in the morning; Mr. Stone and a Dr. Miller (who was a Ph.D. and not an M.D.); a foggy wet-blanket morning, with chill in the air, and a leisurely dining-car breakfast—all seemed part of a good game.

"What is all this about?" I demanded, as the train passed through Harlem.

"A marvelous thing," Mr. Stone replied. "Do you know that there are thousands of photographs existing to-day, taken during the Civil War—photographs of battles and fighting and dead men lying in trenches? They've been forgotten for fifty years."

"But . . . look here," I interrupted, "cameras weren't good enough for that rough work in 1861."

"There's where you're wrong! There was a man named Brady—he worked on one of those old newspapers . . . queer sort of genius . . . he managed to be all over the place with a camera during the war. Everybody thought he was cracked and they just let him run around. We're going to put them in a set of books. Complete pictorial record of the Civil War."

"I know a good deal about the Civil War," I declared. "I know a lot of Southerners and the war is alive to them. So I've just naturally seeped facts about it . . . and I've never heard of the photographs."

"Ask Dr. Miller here. He discovered the Brady pictures; he can tell you more than I can."

"Oh yes," said Dr. Miller. "You must have seen one or two of them. About ten have been

published. There's one of Lincoln in a tent with some officers."

"Yes, I've seen that."

"That's one of the Brady pictures, but I suppose it didn't have Brady's name on it. And, after all, what are ten photographs out of five thousand?"

"Five thousand! But why haven't they been published all these years?"

"That's simple. Until about twenty years ago there was no such thing as a half-tone. Five thousand lithographic plates of these photographs would have cost too much, so they couldn't reproduce the photographs for a big sale. And then it was years before you could use half-tones generally. By that time Brady and his photographs were as forgotten as the dodo."

"Yes, I see. But where are they now? In Springfield? Have you proved their authenticity? Are we going up there to-day to see them? Is that the idea?"

"Yes, that's the reason for this little picnic," said Mr. Stone. "Nice of you to come. It's a hard day for a woman . . . traveling back at five to-night . . . six hours on the train and five hours in Springfield."

"Oh, that's all right!" I assured him. "I'm

too excited to mind that. Are there some actual photographs of battles?"

"Yes, battle scenes and trenches and men in camp and scenes from Libby Prison."

"Honestly? Libby Prison?"

"I've not seen them myself," added Mr. Stone, "but Dr. Miller here has."

"Yes, when I came across them in Springfield, my dear young lady, I was genuinely thunderstruck. The tragic intensity, the patriotic emotions they called forth, left me much moved," said Dr. Miller in his solid round voice.

"Some of them are pretty horrible, I hear," commented Mr. Stone. "I don't know whether we can show pictures of dead men. The public would be shocked."

"Think of it!" Dr. Miller prophesied. "The world will probably never see another great conflict, and these photographs will pass down to the ages, the first and last photographs of a great war —the last memento of barbarism, and yet of unselfish devotion to a cause."

We all agreed that this was so—there never would be another big war. This was in the year 1910.

"No," proclaimed Dr. Miller, "with the closer means of communication—the telegraph and fast

ships—war has become impossible on a large scale."

"Yes, and people understand now how extravagant and foolish it is to settle troubles that way," said Mr. Stone.

"Of course," I added my opinion, "people don't hate one another enough—they have too many common interests."

"The photographs have been buried in Springfield for many years," finally Dr. Miller got back to the cause of our journey.

"Buried in the ground?" I was amazed.

"Well, no—well, no—er-er-of course the man who owned them knew about them, but they were practically thrown away in a garret and nobody paid any attention to them until I unearthed this important news. I saw the thing at once. So I carried my revelation to the *Review of Reviews*. They (here he bowed slightly to Mr. Stone) are the biggest and most substantial establishment producing sets of books in this great country of ours. They will do justice to the permanent and inspiring work that can be built around these stupendous photographs."

"We think," Mr. Stone added drily, "we can make a good set of books out of them, and we want to know what you think of the pictures as material for advertising."

I was highly flattered. Later I wrote torrents of advertising as a result of this day's trip . . . and I'm sure that much of the enthusiasm put into all that printed matter came from my pleasure at being so trusted. Never had my judgment been asked formally on any project so important as this.

While we were eating luncheon at the hotel at Springfield the men told me the story of Brady, the photographer.

With his awkward camera and heavy, easily broken plates he had wandered in and out among the confusions of the Civil War like an obstinate ghost. His persistence and enthusiasm had managed to preserve about five thousand of these plates and get them to New York. He exhibited them for a while and made a poor sort of living that way. But reproduction of them was bad and expensive and so they had been thrown aside and more or less forgotten for years.

After luncheon we went eagerly to a shabby room in a big publishing plant in Springfield. On long tables lay the photographs—some pasted in big scrap books, some loose. Some were in frames on the walls. If we felt a tiny trace of that disappointment that comes with over-advertised events, we crushed it. But we were surprised and interested. How can I convey any of our feeling to

you who read this—to you who have seen moving pictures of the great World War till they are less interesting to you than those of ski jumpers in Switzerland? But there hadn't been any Great War in 1910. There had not been photographs of any big war.

The Civil War was still the most tremendous conflict in which the United States had had a part. The Spanish American War had been a ripple. Those in Europe had seemed dreamlike and remote. There were still men running for office and being elected on Civil War records. There were still fierce spitters of hate for the Yankee or the rebel. And when we entered the World War the newspapers everywhere ran sentimental stories about the North and the South being reunited in one great effort.

In 1910 people were still alive whose faces appeared in the Brady War Pictures. There was many a veteran who was astounded to see again the spot on which he had been shot or taken prisoner. The photographs of the inside of Andersonville and Libby Prisons, with soldiers sleeping or playing or lying wearily waiting for release, were examined with the most absorbed interest. Pictures of corpses and wounded we thought too horrible to publish. How squeamish we would have seemed during the World War!

So to us that day in Springfield these rough photographs taken under slow exposures were a dramatic discovery. Later we found that we were not lonely in our interest and astonishment, and that our enthusiasm was easily conveyed to the book-buyers of the country.

We came back from Springfield full of excitement. It had been a great find. We felt like diggers for treasure in the Bahamas, who had found pirates' gold. We reported our opinions to Mr. C. D. Lanier, the executive head of the *Review of Reviews* company.

I had never met him before. His office was bare and casual-looking, about the kind that a third assistant office manager would have in some town in the Middle West. His face and head had a clear, cool distinction.

"How do you do, ma'am?" his dry cold manner contrasted oddly with a soft, drawling, Southern speech. "What do you think of these photographs?"

"They're unbelievable. They are full of action and drama. There's material there for the most wonderful advertising anybody has ever done on books. It would be like writing an adventure story."

"You think you could write that sort of advertising? It's a pretty masculine kind of subject."

"I know I could write it. I don't like this feminine stuff I'm doing now. I prefer to advertise things to men."

"Well, then, I think you'd better try it. We have decided to make the set of books and we're going to do the best thing on it we've ever done. It'll be a hard job—this advertising. It's got to be just right. We're going to put a lot of money into it."

"Do you mean that you want me to come and work here as a regular job?"

"Yes, ma'am."

So that was settled, and by the most natural transition in the world I was in a new job—the most important I had had up to that time, since three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year would be spent to publish the advertising I was to write.

We sold hundreds of thousands of sets of the Brady War Pictures. They were made into an elaborate set of books (called The Photographic History of the Civil War) by Robert Lanier, now long dead, the youngest son of Sidney Lanier. Advertising appeared everywhere—in all the bigger newspapers, what we called double-page spreads in the *Saturday Evening Post*, pages and double pages month after month in all the leading magazines. Millions of circulars were put in

the mails as quickly as possible. We just couldn't get enough magazines to advertise in; we couldn't get enough lists to circularize; we couldn't make books fast enough.

I enjoyed the writing. There was so much life and movement in it. There was Brady's own life, easily enough turned into a good short story. And the loss and rediscovery of the photographs made as workable material as any I'd ever had. It threw an air of suspense and mystery over all the publicity.

I remember one advertisement showing Northern soldiers in camp, with a headline under it reading, WHO WAS THERE THAT YOU KNEW? A letter came back from a man saying:

> I was there. I am in the first row, the fourth man from the left. You cannot imagine how thunderstruck I was when I opened the magazine and saw myself looking out from the paper, as I was fifty years ago. I have never seen this photograph before. I remember very well when that man Brady came and took it. But he didn't come back and we never saw the picture. Most of the men in the photograph are dead, but a few of us are still alive. . . .

And he gave the names of others who were in the picture.

Letters like that made the work eventful. Nearly always your copy appears in the magazines and you get complaining or congratulatory reports

from the advertiser about the sales, and that is all that happens. But with the *Photographic History*, it was all different. Something happened nearly every day—a letter from a veteran or his widow or his daughter, or an old soldier would come in and talk to us.

Sometimes one of these old men would say, "I can't afford to buy these books, but I wonder if you'd mind letting me look at some of the pictures. I was in it from Bull Run to Appomattox." And we would give him a few prints of the pictures that brought back the adventure of his life.

How it all hurried and flared! To-day it lies forgotten in silence. But it seemed important then—important to all of us, important to me.

With enthusiasm that blazed for a couple of years I wrote advertising with soldiers dashing and flags flying and horses leaping all over it. And ringing words. I suppose I really ought to give Mr. Rudyard Kipling part of the money I earned, because from his verse came the rhythm and swing I needed for this particular advertising. But I cannot imagine anything that would enrage Mr. Kipling more than the thought that he had inspired jingoistic American advertising.

It was easy to be sentimental about a war that had been over for nearly fifty years, when I was sure that there never would be another one.

But I wrote so much about these photographs that at last I grew weary of the books, the pictures—and, above all—of the Civil War. I was like an actress delighted to find her new play a success, then later, after she has said the same lines for about two years, she wishes to Heaven something would happen to kill the thing, so that she could be forced to play another part. Having for the last year or two almost starved in more interesting plays that were failures, she dares not give up her big success.

So I longed for something that would make it impossible for me to go on writing about the *Photographic History*. The something did happen, but it was a little larger than I had anticipated. The Great War came and crashed down on the poor Brady War Pictures so that no one ever wanted to hear of them again. The sale stopped abruptly. We couldn't give the books away. Even the veterans of the Civil War scorned it, because every Sunday newspaper brought them photographs that made the poor Brady plates look posed and flat. And all the events of the War of 1861 sank into littleness before the massiveness of the European conflict. The Civil War and the Brady War Pictures became suddenly "old stuff." Nobody wanted to hear about either of them.

After all, the Civil War was the more personal and human. In the World War everything was mass movement and machinery, like the new engines—airplanes and tanks and submarines—but it was a cold, inhuman affair. Later I had to write the copy for huge advertising of the *History of the World War*, by Frank Simonds, and found it much more difficult to put color and feeling into this than into the individual, human contacts of the Civil War. Still, that was partly because I so hated the World War.

For a long time I had not known whether Mr. Lanier liked my work or not. This was because of his extreme reserve, brevity of speech, and perhaps a certain shyness. Yet I had been with the *Review of Reviews* only two months when he raised my salary twenty dollars a week without my asking for it—this in an organization noted for its economical management. I liked Mr. Lanier's direct methods. He spoke less than any person with whom I have ever done business. Retiring and quiet, he is one of the ablest men in the publishing business. There was a quaint contrast between his "Thank you, ma'am, for coming in," and his swift judgment and brief speech.

I never ceased to wonder that this financier should be the son of Sidney Lanier, the impractical poet's poet.

One of the small things that made it easy to work for him was that he never forgot his own mistakes and seldom remembered yours. He would say:

"Well, if we had followed your advice, we never should have run that advertisement. You said we shouldn't and you were right."

Never, "I regret to say that that was done at your suggestion."

Few employees ever leave the *Review of Reviews;* everybody has been there for a long, long time—some for more than twenty years, a rare thing in that shifting, changing world of small profits—the publishing business.

But Mr. Lanier was also difficult to work with because of certain moods. Naturally daring, with business vision, in these moods he closed up, became bitterly cautious. The expenditure of a hundred dollars was greater to him then than of a hundred thousand at another time. He felt that the business outlook was black, that no more sets of books were going to be sold. All great money-makers are pessimists. Fear of destruction and poverty forces them always to keep on making money. They are never convinced that either they, their business, or their families are safe.

My own mind works just the other way. When I was so depressed by the need of money that it

seemed unbearable I always went out and bought something I could not afford. This slap in the face of fate restored my self-confidence and optimism, but it also proved that I did not have the temperament of those who get rich. Where the instinctive millionaire would have moved to cheaper quarters and discharged the maid, I spent forty dollars for a new silver tea urn, which never worked.

After I had been with the *Review of Reviews* for about three years, something happened which seemed to me a disaster, but which proved to be pure good luck. Misunderstood at the moment of happening, blind events weave the strange pattern of life, and reveal how puerile and childish is one's own judgment. The sale of the *Photographic History* had temporarily fallen to pieces, and in a mood of depression Mr. Lanier said to me one day early in June:

"There doesn't seem very much for you to do any more, does there?"

"No," I replied. "But I thought that this summer you wanted me to work on remnants of editions of one set of books or another that need to be cleared out. There isn't anything to do on the Brady Pictures right now."

"That's hardly worth while, is it?"

"If you don't think so, it isn't," I replied. "Do you wish me to look for another job?"

"Yes, it would be better," he answered.

It is a serious matter to be thrown out of a job in the advertising business at the beginning of June. It is nearly impossible to get a new place before September. I saw a hard summer ahead of me and was worried and depressed. It was a long summer, though I was able to dig up enough free-lance copywriting to tide me over after a fashion. The day after Labor Day I went to work for the Presbrey Advertising Agency.

After I had been with the Presbrey Company three months, Mr. Lanier came to see its president. He asked him if I would be permitted to go back to the *Review of Reviews* for half of each day to renew the writing of advertising on the *Photographic History*. This was in 1912, before the Great War. If this were allowed, that advertising would be placed through the agency, which would thus secure some thirty thousand dollars additional commissions a year. Mr. Presbrey told me about it. I indignantly refused. I was tired of the *Photographic History*. I couldn't bear to look at those same photographs that had been so exciting two years before, but more I was resentful because of my hard summer. Mr. Presbrey persuaded me that for the agency's sake I

ought to consent. I was so depressed that I left the office for the day and went to the movies, and was unable to do much work for some days.

My judgment was bad, because this turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me in the way of making money. Because I lost the *Review of Reviews* job I secured one with an agency. Because I had to work again on the Brady War Picture account, I was able later to make myself an independent position in the advertising business. Through the friendship of Mr. Lanier and Mr. Stone I got several accounts and made a good deal of money. In later disasters I used to comfort myself with the thought that perhaps they too were fate's ungracious way of leading in good fortune. So I replaced depression by superstition.

CHAPTER XVI

Sob Stuff

MOST young copywriters consider an advertising agency a sort of college for learning advertising. When you get to be a copywriter in one of them you feel that you have taken your Ph.D. degree. Of course you seldom get a chance to do this deliberately—you accomplish it if you can, if accident pushes an opening before you. A copywriter in an agency has to write advertising for all kinds of products. The training is good. It is to the advertising writer what the clinic is to a physician.

An advertising agency is a lively place. You pass so abruptly from non-skid tires to safety pins, from silk stockings to glass doorknobs. You write one hour about a tree surgeon and the next about cogwheels. It is a place of swift movement—of constant shifts—of things finished at the last possible gasp—of seconds grabbed from eternity—of huge presses stopped to make a last-minute change—of superhuman rush jobs—of hurrying and joshing and smoking and swearing. Something happens every minute—some triumph or some

disaster. There are no middle tones, for all is colored by the fury of creation.

It was in 1912 that I got the job with the Frank Presbrey Company, one of the largest of the advertising agencies. Except in the department stores, there were then almost no women who wrote advertising copy. But it happened that for the preceding three years, while with the *Woman's Home Companion* and the *Review of Reviews*, I had been writing copy in my spare time for the Presbrey Company about a baby food.

I am not proud of having done this work. The manufacturer assured us at the time that the product was good, and I took his word for it. But later experiments have proved that it was not perhaps as good as he thought it. This food was mixed with water before being used; physicians now say that with rare exceptions baby foods should be mixed with milk and not with water. In 1909 the manufacturer told us that there were many places where it was impossible to buy good milk, and that there were also many mothers who were too lazy to sterilize bad milk at home. Both these statements were and are true.

The baby-food manufacturers had had advertisements which all looked exactly alike. There was a little photograph of an overfat baby, with a note saying that "it" (*sic*) had gained so and so

many pounds, and the name of the food. They were so much alike that you never knew whose advertisement you had seen. The Presbrey Agency had a client who wanted something feminine and different. A salesman on one of the newspapers thought I could do the work and advised me to go and see about it.

I found a most imposing office on Fourth Avenue. Advertising agencies nearly always have beautiful quarters. They have nothing to sell but brains—you can't take your brains out and display them as you would a sample of embroidery; so you have to express your ability outwardly in paneled walls, beautiful desks, and insinuating carpets.

At the Presbrey Agency I was shown into a handsome square private office, with a soft blue carpet, gray and blue silk curtains, a vast, quiet mahogany desk. Beside the heavy bronze inkwell from Tiffany's stood the photograph of a woman in a low-cut dress and a fur-collared velvet wrap. From behind the desk jumped up a man who was only five feet three, but who did not look small. He was noticeably dressed—I saw a purple tie and a ring set with a large amethyst seal. He greeted me as though he had known me all my life, talked a little about the baby food and extensively for an hour about everything else in the world, includ-

ing his most intimate private affairs. This bubbling talk made me doubt his solidity as a man of affairs, and I had little faith in doing business with anybody so emotional.

Among other things, I learned that day from him that his wife had the smallest hands in the world; that he was going to Europe for a long, lovely trip very soon; that the only way to drink champagne was to pour it into a glass over a peach and a little cracked ice; that he had the best secretary who had ever lived; that she was a darling: that he had worked as a young man as a hand in a paper mill; that he had had a wild and riotous career at a Middle Western university; that he had been trained for the ministry, and didn't I feel the emotional thrill of a splendid High Episcopal service; that Y——, another high official in the agency, was a rotter—to watch out for his tricks; that I looked the kind of person he liked —that he always knew, especially with women.

"As for this baby-food stuff," he said, "for God's sake put some sob stuff in it. You know. And make it beautiful, too. Make it beautiful, make the words sing. Heavens! There isn't a woman in the world that cares about facts. That kind of stuff you write for the *Woman's Home Companion,* that's what gets 'em. Tears! Make 'em weep.

"But be careful, my client wants us to be honest in this thing. Tell 'em always to go to a doctor if they can and get a special prescription for their own baby. If they can't do that, tell 'em how bad the milk supply is in lots of places and that they'd better use this food. And give 'em the figures about the baby death rate—but don't say it flatly. You know if you just put a lot of figures in front of a woman she passes you by. If we only had the nerve to put a hearse in the ad, you couldn't keep the women away from the food."

Our later experience showed us that this was a mistake. The sad advertisements were failures. The cheerful ones, which told the benefits to the baby, were the ones which appealed to mothers. But that was something we both had to learn.

He pleased me very much by going on with these remarks:

"We ought to have a woman in this agency, anyway. But the old man can't see it. I believe in women. They've got intuition—and feeling—And it's intuition that counts. Logic gets nowhere. Now you take my wife. Believe me, if she didn't run me I wouldn't amount to anything. I'd probably go to the dogs lickety-split. You know I never do a thing in business without consulting her. She fixed up this office for me; her taste is exquisite. Don't you love this paper-

weight?" All this in a seductive musical voice and very appealing—like a bad little boy.

Though I liked the boyishness of it and the friendliness, it did not inspire me with much faith. I found later that underneath this talk lay a vivid advertising instinct—the kind of feeling for good advertising which cannot be taught. After that I worked with Harry Porter for ten years in peace and jollity.

But, before that first meeting, he had been highly recommended to me and so I sat down before the problem. There was the advertising that had been run for twenty-five years by these providers to babies. Think of trying to sell a woman something for her baby and calling that baby "it." Might almost as well call it an *infant*. "It" as a name for a baby together with "its" photograph disappeared forever from the advertising copy of this particular concern. We had lovely drawings, which looked more babyish and dada than any photograph.

We had to tell women about the scientific basis of the food, but it had to be put in words of one syllable. I talked also about the feelings of the mother, her joys and her fears. We had learned that women seldom buy anything through logical reasoning, not even for their babies. When you are selling a product to millions of people you

must present even its facts so that they will reach the average mind, and that average has nothing to do with reason. But before the feminists grow indignant let me hasten to say that the same emotional appeal works equally on men, although it has to be made in a different manner. To sell articles to men it is often wise to appear to reason with them, but you must be careful merely to appear to do so—never actually to be logical. Or you will sell no goods.

I wrote this food advertising for three years. It appeared in the bigger women's magazines. The advertiser liked the copy so much—it was so full of tears—that I was at last reluctantly given a job in the Presbrey Agency—so being one of the first woman copywriters in a large agency.

I arrived bright and late the day after Labor Day at the office of the Presbrey Agency to begin my new job. I was given a desk and a chair in a little cubbyhole of an office on a court. Harry Porter, who had with boyish enthusiasm three years before given me the baby-food copy to write, led me around the office and introduced me to a few executives, and then I was left stranded at my desk. There was no more baby-food copy to write for at least a year. Nobody told me what else to do, nobody explained to me how an advertising agency worked nor which of the numerous

departments did what. Memories of the little job of six weeks in the old Hampton Agency helped, but the advertising business had changed much in nine years.

I have compared notes with friends in various large advertising agencies of that time, and find that the picture of my experiences might have been in almost any of them. I have not been in the offices of the Presbrey Company since 1915, and I hear and have no doubt that the great change which has made the advertising game into a business has transformed that organization among all the others.

There was a confused impression in my mind of a large department of artists under an art director, but I didn't just know how to use this "art department." I wasn't sure whether one went to it with a vague problem about selling goods and said, "Give me some ideas," or whether one laid out advertising roughly and then said to the director, "Now have a drawing made for me." Nobody told me whether all the drawings I used were to be made in that department or whether I could engage outside artists, or whether the art department engaged the outside artists.

There was a large printing department, but nobody told me where its authority began, whether I had to read the proofs of my own circulars or

whether the printing department read the proofs. Nobody told me just how much or how little I had to do about anything. Later I discovered that I did as much or as little as I had capacity for doing. There were eight or nine other copywriters in the place. Each had in similar fashion worked out his own destiny. Some merely wrote words which were put into set spaces in certain advertisements. I could not do that, so I was allowed to make my job as wide as I liked.

This situation I later found was not peculiar to the Presbrey Agency; it was universal among advertising agencies at that time. Indeed, it is almost inevitable in a business where imagination must cut such a figure.

The first few days in any agency are always disheartening for a copywriter. There seems to be nowhere for him to fit in. It is a month or two before he slips in and becomes a part of the machinery. Many a time in later years did a new copywriter come forlornly into my office, slump down into a chair, and ask, "Say, do you think they're going to fire me?"

"Why?" I would answer.

"Well, I haven't got one blessed thing in the world to do."

"Aren't you writing copy on Black Hooks and Eyes, Mr. Johnson?"

"Yeh—but I finished that last week and the chief didn't say a word about whether it was any good or not. I'm fooling around with some copy now on that lead pipe account, but I can't get anybody to look at it."

I would try to give him courage: "Cheer up, cheer up! You're about the tenth man who's come in and talked like that. In about two months you'll be cursing the day you were born, coming in here and saying, 'What the devil do these people think I am, think I'm run by electricity? How much work do they expect, anyway?' Just pin this in front of your mind—in an advertising agency a copywriter always has too much or too little to do."

CHAPTER XVII

Fifty-Seven Varieties

I HAD been with the Frank Presbrey Company about two days when one of the vice-presidents called me in and said, "You know the Heinz Company advertising, don't you?"

Of course. Who doesn't? I thought of the nice, gleaming bottles of preserves and pickles—the fifty-seven varieties—the homely Heinz mustard pot—the lofty Heinz plum pudding.

"Certainly," I said. "The fifty-seven varieties."

"No, it's more. They have more'n fifty-seven. Seventy, I believe. Well, the account's shaky—it changes every year. Several agencies are going after it. We're going to have a try at it. It's a whopper!"

"Sounds fascinating."

"Would you like to work on it?"

I said I'd love to.

"Well, here's an idea. Sell them a Heinz Shelf in the pantry—not just one product like Heinz Baked Beans or Pickles, but a whole Shelf. See? Sell all the products around that central idea. How does that strike you?"

I said the idea sounded good to me.

"All right then, go ahead and do your worst."

It was not usual to throw a copywriter into an important job in such headlong fashion. But I found afterward that this vice-president, who was also the copy chief, and who was familiarly known as Tobey, was popularly supposed in the office to be bored by the whole business of copy and copy-writing. I don't know . . . he had a bored and tired look which was a sort of defense. He left the advertising business long ago for purely trade fields at great profit to himself. When he told me to go ahead on this spacious order in his weary, rather cynical manner, I was surprised. I had only a small job, and little experience. I had to ask a few more questions, so I demanded:

"What am I to do? Just get some ads ready?"

"No, do the whole thing."

This answer would have thrown me into hopeless bewilderment if I had not had friends in other advertising agencies who had explained to me their mechanism and methods of work. So I understood from these words that the vice-president meant me to write what we call in advertising a "plan"—that is, a seductive presentation of what we could do for the Heinz Company, a sort of bombastic essay divided into chapters and with plenty of A's, B's, and C's. This was easy for

me; it was the kind of thing that had many years before won me high marks at school on subjects of which I knew nearly nothing.

It also meant that I was to prepare a series of advertisements to show this prospective advertiser. That I was to put into them all the imagination and originality that I could and was to have an entirely free hand about methods of illustration and presentation. That I would show my work from time to time to the copy chief for corrections and suggestions, but that I would bother him with it as little as possible.

Still, I had to have a little more definite information, so I asked, "Do you want the advertisements merely typewritten, with rough sketches of the art work? Or shall I have complete advertisements with finished drawings and all the type set by the printer?"

He answered, "Complete advertisements set in type ready to slam into the magazines."

I had one more question to ask. "Don't you think," I said, "that I'd better make them full-page advertisements for the women's magazines, so that they will look like something?"

"Oh yes," he said. "If they want to make them smaller, they can, but make 'em big to begin with, so they'll stand out."

So I set out and had a beautiful time. First

came a trip to a dozen grocery stores until I had succeeded in buying a couple of bottles or jars of each product sold by the Heinz Company. The usual process in such a case would have been to see the Heinz people, go over the plant, and get samples from them for preparing the advertisements. But the Heinz Company knew nothing of the whole affair. Perhaps it did not even have any desire to transfer its account from the company which handled its advertising at the moment. However, this company did have a reputation for frequent changes in this part of its business, and so there were nearly always half a dozen agencies on the trail of its account.

This method of soliciting accounts was in later years called unethical in the advertising business. The members of the American Association of Advertising Agencies have a hard and fast contract with one another forbidding this particular kind of piracy. How absurdly weak all such agreements are in the face of the necessities of competition! Even when the association was strong and its contracts rigorous, these agreements often collapsed under the urgencies of trade. As late as 1923, when I was with another agency, we prepared an advertising plan at the request of the Buster Brown Stocking Company and found that eighteen other agencies of high

standing had also got up elaborate plans, costing from five hundred to several thousand dollars each, in an effort to get the account. Only five of these had been asked to compete.

Still, this method of getting business is so unprofitable that many of the large agencies have abandoned it. The Presbrey Agency is a particularly conservative organization, but in 1912, when we tried to get the Heinz account, there was no association and no such contract; the field was free for all. So, since the Heinz Company knew nothing of our endeavors, I had to buy its products at various grocery stores.

The next step was to open one can or one bottle of each. Some of them I tested, in my own kitchen at home, some I gave to other women, asking for opinions on the quality of the foods and their uses. In later years this would have been done in most large agencies by a domestic-science expert. But no such thought occurred then either to me or to anyone else. Besides, I was not in any mood to engage experts. I was having a glorious party.

There were many things that could be done with these foods. They could be eaten as they were out of the can, but they could also be combined in new recipes which I invented. I am only a passable cook, but I can make up the most

wonderful recipes for other people to carry out. There were most entertaining menu possibilities in these cans—complete dinners, lunches, teas, etc., made up entirely out of Heinz products. It frightens me to-day to think of the indigestion which would have followed if anybody had ever eaten these combinations. I borrowed charming china and silver and dainty linen from one place or another. We had the foods cooked in casseroles or arranged pleasantly on plates and on doilies, then set them out on tables, with careful regard for etiquette. There was a tea tray meticulously correct, an invalid's tray, a Christmas dinner which wound up with plum pudding and of which the main dish may have been chicken *à la King*. This was a long job, full of trying details, which would have bored me a few years later. Then it was all new, and seemed finished only too soon.

Of each of these arrangements of food we made photographs; then the art department would lay out a page and set the photograph in some good spot. I wrote words which sang of the goodness and tempting flavor of these eatables. The whole thing was then turned over to the printer, and a series of what seemed to us alluring advertisements were delivered, each one ready to "slam in" to a full page in the larger women's maga-

zines. The food on these pages looked good to eat—naturally a most important item in the advertising of foods. From this point of view alone our copy had novelty, because that simple idea had apparently occurred to few food advertisers in 1912.

Then we had portfolios made, each one holding a set of the advertisements printed on plate paper. How we admired them, the president of the agency, its vice-president, its art director, its business manager, and I! We all spent many "conferences" in enthusiastic commendation of this great work. It had taken me just exactly a month to prepare. It had cost about a thousand dollars, aside from my salary.

And then came the anti-climax. The heads of the Heinz Company flatly refused even to look at our plan or our copy. For a whole year the agency kept on trying to get their attention. Trips were made to Pittsburgh. Subtle plans were laid; inviting hints were dropped—but there was no response. The Heinz Company never saw this advertising at all. And, as naturally it was not shown to any other advertiser, this appetizing campaign is still lying asleep in the files of the agency, unless perhaps it has been thrown into the arms of the waste-paper buyer.

To any person with common sense all this

sounds grotesque. And it is grotesque. Several years later I met the man who had been advertising manager of the Heinz Company while we were doing all our hard work. He told me that the company would rather have gone out of business than to have given one dollar's worth of advertising to the Presbrey Agency.

"But why?" I said. "It is a good agency. What was the idea?"

"Oh," he said, "a personal prejudice against the Presbrey Agency . . . that's all. Old man Heinz just didn't like them. He was a queer old fellow —the old man—all church and prejudicies. He once took a whole mob of people to the Holy Land at his own expense. He knew Frank Presbrey was a good churchman too—but maybe it was a different kind. You know we heard a lot about that copy. I wanted to see it. I heard it was good. But the old man wouldn't let me even look at it. I'd like to see it now, if you can get hold of it."

No academic pleader for the socialist cause could devise a more convincing example of the absurd waste of competition than this incident, taken as a whole or in parts. First the waste involved in advertising foods at all, since everybody has to eat; then the waste caused by half a dozen organizations each struggling to get his wasteful advertising; and then the final waste of all our

work prepared for nothing. But for me individually it was a fine bit of training!

I didn't have much idle time after that with the agency. I wrote copy about wall coverings, about soups, about insurance, about cigarettes, about anything that came along, except mechanical products such as engines and automobiles.

One of the clients whose products I described in winning words was the R. & G. Corset Company. At that time corsets were worn by nearly every woman and the business flourished. One day the R. & G. Company offered to give me any corset I should select, even to the most costly they had. I thanked them and tactlessly said that I did not wear corsets. They were coldly angry, and demanded that another copywriter be put on the job.

I think I have been responsible for a mountain of popovers baked and eaten in the United States. We had the account of a company which made aluminum pots and pans. Kitchen ware is often beautiful, its shapes and color and glitter appeal to women. But baking pans in a photograph are dull unless they arouse appetite. I had a simple recipe for popovers—one egg, one cup of flour, one cup of milk, beaten with an egg beater, baked rapidly in aluminum pans in a gas stove or in pottery dishes in a coal stove. I put this recipe

and the aluminum baking dish with popovers bursting out of it, at the top of the advertisement. It sold so many pans that it ran in women's magazines and newspapers for years and years, long after I had left the Presbrey Agency and had ceased to have anything to do with the account.

I liked doing the advertising of the Ætna Accident Insurance Company of Hartford. When this account was given me by Harry Porter, he felt that it would be a good idea to use for it the kind of copy which up to that time had been limited to the sale of mail-order books—popular, emotional, and energetic. The insurance company was not at all sure about this policy.

"You know," they said, "most of this insurance is sold to important executives, bankers, financiers, and people like that, and it won't do to be too popular in appealing to them."

"The banker's not so very different from anybody else," we argued. "He'll be convinced by the same kind of talk as the clerk or workingman, especially where accidents are concerned. His point of view about that is a universal one."

The Ætna Company agreed to let us use this kind of appeal, and it was successful. We tried two methods. This was still in the days when advertising had much experimenting to do. In one sort of advertisement we pointed out the hor-

rors and terrors of those who did not take out accident insurance. One such page showed a weeping widow with her children with a headline—"WILL THIS HAPPEN TO YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN?"

The other kind of advertisement pointed out the rewards and pleasures of those who were wise enough to provide themselves with accident insurance. One of the advertisements showed a man lying bandaged in a bed, smiling joyously as a postman came up and handed him a check from the Ætna Company.

The gloomy advertisements were a failure; the cheerful ones a success.

The Accident Insurance Company was one department of the much larger general Ætna Insurance Company of Hartford. In the year 1925 I glanced through the *Literary Digest* and the *Saturday Evening Post* and saw in them frequent whole-page advertisements of the Ætna Insurance Company. They are all along the line that we found unprofitable for their accident department in 1913. It naturally makes me wonder if anybody in that company ever looked up the records of that old effort. It was impossible to make a mistake about the "pulling power" of the copy, since each advertisement was couponed and keyed.

Another client, who made a mechanical piano,

was turned over to me. I could write rhythmic and emotional copy about it—the easiest kind for me. All went well until one day I went down to the company and made some experiments in playing the mechanical piano for myself. I played it so badly that the musical ear of the head of the company was offended. He told the chief that he really thought somebody who could play a piano ought to be put on the account.

So the work at Presbrey's went on, sometimes successful, sometimes not—with the uncertainty, the chance, the confusion of all advertising agencies. Good nature, life, made the days fly. Most of the executives of that day have long ago left the Frank Presbrey Company and it is now an entirely different organization. But that is true of the whole advertising business. Agencies in 1912 still got accounts almost entirely on the basis of copy or financial help. The dietary expert, the research worker, the phychologist . . . all the glittering specialists of a later day were unknown then. The word Service was, thank goodness, also unknown.

CHAPTER XVIII

Less Work. More Pay

THREE wicked djinns popped up in my business path and should have closed the road to me altogether: I am a woman, I am a Jew, and I am a radical. If you were a novelist writing the story of such a person you could build up a drama of tremendous obstacles overcome. But if you merely lived with them, you would not build a tragedy or even any drama of conflicting forces—you would do as I did, live from day to day and almost forget that there were any such drawbacks. Almost—not quite.

I was too often reminded that I was merely a woman. One thought kept me from becoming a feminist—the thought that the trouble did not come from any innate antagonism on the part of men, but from a basic economic situation. It was evident enough from what I saw that as soon as the work of enough women was needed outside the home the discrimination against them would disappear. It seemed foolish to feel resentment against men as men for the difficulties that came to me as a woman. It wasn't their fault or mine;

we were both living in a changing civilization and were equally victims of a general condition.

Nearly every job or account after I left the *Woman's Home Companion* was given me reluctantly because I was a woman. In each case the advertiser would have preferred a man with my training and turn of mind. It was harder for me to get accounts than for men to get them because I had to prove more of what I could do in advance. For the same reason it was a little easier for me to hold these accounts afterward.

In 1912 there were almost no women in advertising agencies. So, because I was a woman, I had had to fight my way into the Presbrey Agency. I was still only a subordinate working for a salary. Often I did the most difficult work of the office—that on copy and plans in the fight for new accounts. And I wasn't getting as much as men who did less. So, a year later, I asked for more money. The vice-president wanted time "to think the matter over." I waited two weeks and tried again.

He was good-humoredly patient with me. "You know you're getting a mighty good salary for a woman. What's the hurry, any way; you know the first of the year is the time we think about these things. Now be a good girl and don't worry so much."

I have always hated to ask for a raise—always I have felt humiliated and resentful. But only twice have I received one without asking for it. This time I had had enough of haggling. If it possibly could be avoided, I should never work for a salary again. Like most decisions, this one was made in a moment and rationalized afterward.

So I said one day to the vice-president: "You don't have to worry any more about that raise in salary. I have a better idea. From this Saturday on I'll work on a commission basis."

"Now where'd you get that notion? Commission basis! We've never had a woman working on commission. There isn't one in the whole agency business."

"Then I'll be the first one. I like to start new things. Why not?"

"But that wouldn't be fair to you," he expostulated. "You'll be taking such a chance. Now you're working for a salary and every Saturday you know it's there—sure and certain."

"Yes, but that's just it. I don't like sure and certain things."

"Do you realize that on a commission basis you mightn't make nearly as much money?"

"I know it," I replied, feeling the uncertainty vividly at the moment. "But right now, to begin with, I've got the *Review of Reviews* account.

This advertising would not be here without me. I want to start with that. And then I think I can get other accounts. You can pay me the usual five per cent commission as you do to salesmen."

I could see that my suggestion spread a fog of bewilderment in his mind. There was really nothing about my proposal that could have mattered to the agency, one way or the other; but from the look of determined jocularity on his face one would have thought that the future of the American nation was about to be decided.

After a while he said with the joshing manner that we are all used to in offices, "What do you think you are, anyway—the president of a bank—or a man or something? You know we don't pay all salesmen five per cent."

"I know you don't, but you pay all salesmen who write their own copy five per cent. And I'll write the copy on any account I bring in."

"But look here—an experienced advertising man like Carraway only gets three per cent."

He put (unconsciously) a noticeable emphasis on *experienced* and *man.*

"Yes, and he only brings in the client—talks to him, sells him. He couldn't prepare an ad to save his life."

"Well, I'll have to talk it over with the chief. I don't think he'll like the idea of a woman work-

ing on commission. It isn't business-like. Don't you see that? It isn't dignified for a large agency like this to have a woman working on commission."

"Oh, pshaw!" was my reply to this.

"You're such a feminine sort of woman. There's something unfeminine about working on such a risky basis."

At this I just laughed, and he laughed. What else was there to do? And yet he was more or less sincere. He felt, as did nearly everybody else, that there was something undignified, unbusiness-like and unfeminine about a woman's getting accounts and working for commissions like a man.

I said, "Now don't talk like a child." And I have found myself saying that to men many times in the years that followed.

So in this natural and more or less accidental fashion I made a most important step for me. From that time on I was more independent. Although at first I made only about a hundred dollars a week on this new arrangement, I was more independent than men in the organization who were getting two or three times that amount. And I had been getting only sixty-two dollars as a salary. There were three fascinating aspects to this new commission arrangement for me. One was this independence; another the sense of risk; the third,

a feeling of full responsibility. No longer would I hesitate to take long vacations, to go to California or Europe, to come to the office only two or three days in the summer. When, a little while later, I was married, this freedom became even more useful.

Then I set out to get more business of my own. I am not in any obvious way a good saleswoman. The average successful salesman is gregarious, talkative, cordial. A spectacular appearance is a help. He should like to go into strange offices to meet men he never saw before. I know an advertising salesman who loves to start in the morning and figure out how many new offices he can go into that day, how many new acquaintances he can make.

I had a feeling that amounted almost to terror about going into a strange office, where I knew no one. I never saw a prospective client unless he knew all about me in advance and had invited me to come. This, which grew out of a defect in my character, happened to be pretty good "sales strategy," as they say in the trade magazines. It staged my entrance, after a fashion.

Not liking to do much talking, I quite unconsciously and naturally gave the advertiser an opportunity to talk all he wanted to.

At first I was troubled because I was small and

didn't look like much. It took me years to realize that even this didn't do any harm. I found it out because of much puzzling over the lack of success of another advertising woman. Men were so dazzled by her baby-faced beauty that they did not always realize that back of her blue eyes lay a cool brain, and that this little blonde was a most able advertising woman. She reached the point where she was making about six thousand dollars a year as a copywriter and she never got any farther, in spite of her beauty, her advertising knowledge, and a knack for making friends.

Men were afraid to give her advertising accounts. A man would think to himself: "Am I giving her this business because she's a competent person or because she's a pretty woman? I'm afraid my judgment is being warped by her looks. . . . But she is a good advertising woman . . . the stuff she showed me was fine. Well, I don't know. Maybe I wouldn't think it so fine if she weren't so pretty. I guess I'd better deal with a man."

Or the advertising manager of a company would be asked to recommend a new agency to his board of directors. He would hesitate a long time before introducing this beautiful girl to the board. He would say in his own mind, "They'll think

I'm just sending her in to them because she's a good looker. I can't afford that."

The dangers of sex are not always just what they may seem at first glance in this complicated world. There are many men who will not have a beautiful stenographer.

One thing helped me to sell, and that is a peculiar, indescribable ability to catch out of the air what the people around me are thinking. Intuition, would you call it? No, something stronger. I have known more men than women who have it—often novelists—many salesmen. Sitting in a room full of people, there come into my mind with sometimes painful intensity the feelings, the wordless thoughts, of the people about me. So that a long social evening, a long business conference, leave me exhausted.

And ideas for advertising came easily to me. These are not nearly so important as people outside the advertising business are apt to think, but they do help if they come at exactly the right moment.

The first accounts I got came naturally enough from other publishers, who had seen my work for the *Review of Reviews*.

One day at luncheon, perhaps at the old Aldine Club or later at the Players Club or the National Arts, one publisher would say to another: "That

looks like good advertising you're doing now. How's it pulling?"

"Very well."

"Who does it? Somebody in your own shop?"

"No." And he would tell a little about what I had done.

"Could we get her? Would you mind? Would you feel that there was any competition?" And so I'd get a new publishing account. It so happened that I worked for *Harper's,* for Doubleday, Page, for Scribner's, for *Asia,* for *Hearst's Magazine,* for *Pictorial Review,* for the *Delineator*—a dozen or more.

And when I had them going pretty well I began to get customers in other lines of business—curtains, stockings, fabrics, cosmetics, perfumes. All these are much easier to sell—and therefore much easier to advertise—than either books or magazines.

Oddly enough, most of my earlier accounts were what are called men's accounts. The books and magazines I advertised were usually sold to men. Only later did I manage to get women's accounts. Men were doing with difficulty the feminine copy which would have been so easy for me and for the few other women who were writing advertising. Later, all but the dullest business men gradually came to see that articles used by

women should be advertised by women. The awkward spectacle of men advertising fashions, pots and pans, or beauty preparations became less common. But men are still doing much of it, although there are a hundred women who could do it more easily.

When a man wants to write an advertisement about cold cream he has to ask his wife and sister-in-law and cousin and stenographer what she does with cold cream and how and when and why, while a woman sits down and writes freely and from the heart about beauty. Even as late as 1924 I knew one bright young man in a big agency who wrote copy on brassières, getting his material and inspiration from his dancing partners. There are some men, I know, with a flair for fashions and some women who love and understand machinery, but these are so rare that they can't be considered in a general discussion.

It seems odd that women should have so hard a time to get work that belongs naturally to them, but men have some reason on their side. We women are not so easy to work with as men. When you see a woman who is doing well in business, you nearly always see one who is neurotic or weary or tempestuous. Seldom do you see one who is calm and serene. It is this way. Women who are much abler than others are not normal,

and men who are abler than others are not normal, either. Both such men and such women have some things in them which are stronger than in other people. They are not made up evenly of ingredients like a well-made bread, but have too much of one thing, like a soufflé, and have to be handled with care. They are more sensitive or more alive, or they are more greedy or more cruel, than other people. Whether they are men or women, these people are more some single thing than the people about them. When you find a woman who is earning fifteen or twenty-five thousand dollars a year, she is likely to be much more of a person than a man making the same money. When he started to work, something at least was taken for granted in him; the people he worked with thought he could do this or that and laid a path for him to walk on. When the woman started, nothing was taken for granted except that she might be a good clerk, and she had to lay her own path. She had to give more proof than the men who worked with her. And so she had to have a little more brains or character, a little harder will than the man who reached the same place. He had to walk on the road and sometimes he lost his breath and sometimes it was very hilly, but the road was there. She lost her breath, too, and sometimes found the road hilly; and she had

to make her road step by step, before she could walk on it. And so when she reached the end of it she was more breathless and exhausted than he and she was also stronger. Her mental and spiritual muscles had been more hardened by the trip.

And so she is harder to live with. Her personal life is more difficult than his. She is proceeding on the theory that sex is sin and so she is neurotic. She is married, and housekeeping, no matter how simple, gives her a little more to carry than the man who works with her. Or she has children and that makes complications.

Men who stand out from others, the Napoleons and the Tolstois, are hard to live with. The woman who makes fifteen or twenty-five thousand dollars a year is neither a Napoleon nor a Tolstoi. But she has just enough of some quality different from other people to make her difficult.

Women would work more easily if they stayed at home two days a month. No woman should be at work in the stimulating atmosphere of an office during the first two days of her monthly indisposition. No matter how equable she may be ordinarily, or how strong, she is at that time likely to be nervous and depressed. There are some banks in New York which have a dispensation allowing women to stay home two days a month. But few other organizations realize that

such a rule would give them better work, more work, and more serenity. I have seen many women sit with aching backs and splitting heads hour after hour at typewriters and bookkeeping desks. I have seen many women lose their tempers with customers, with employers, with employees, because of the nervous strain at that time. It is not only shame, but feminism, which keeps women at work when they ought to be resting.

Feminism makes us take work too hard. We are new at it and want to prove that we are as good as men. It is the old story of the person who feels inferior being for that reason just a little better dressed or more noisy than the person who is sure of himself. We are still so unsure of ourselves in activities that once were set aside for men that we are likely to overact the part.

When a man is tired he usually stops and goes home; a woman goes ahead on nervous energy. One afternoon at six o'clock in a Fifth Avenue office two women and a man were working on the first number of a new magazine. "It looks like an all-night job if we're going to get this to the printer to-morrow morning," said one of the women (the one who told me this story).

The others agreed, but at about seven the man got up and left, saying he was going out for dinner, would be back later. The women looked

at each other angrily. "Just think of his leaving us in the lurch like this! Men make me sick. Why couldn't he just take a sandwich later?"

At nine the man came back, cheerfully remarking that he had had a good dinner and a bath. At eleven the two women, nervous and exhausted, had to stop for a little food.

At six o'clock the next morning, when the job was done, the women were withered, the man fresh and calm, although he had done more work than both of them.

Many of us have not yet found out the emptiness of the cult of bustling hard work. It is one of the religions in which we are brought up and it is tangled up illogically, as is the way of superstitions, with the American religion of exercise. Only gradually did I discover that for me nothing was more inefficient than to get up bright and early in the morning, take a cold shower and a good walk, and arrive briskly at the office for a good day's work. Alas! the brisk day's work never materialized. The snappy beginning was all there was to that day. I worked most easily when I abandoned all these religious rites and went my own atheistic way.

At nine in the morning, instead of leaping brightly into the arena, I rang a sybaritic bell for breakfast. It came on a green-and-yellow tray

designed for the lazy. This had a removable glass top and side pockets that held books and letters and newspapers. When the breakfast had been taken away, the tray became a desk. On it I wrote, I rested the telephone—it held even a small typewriter. I was ready for the day's work. The office called up at about ten o'clock and told me the business news. My own telephoning was that of a person impecunious in energy—only the briefest calls. Such copy as I wrote in later years was dictated right there, either to a copywriter or to a secretary. If difficult copy or plans had to be written, I would stay in that room all day. On most days I reached the office about twelve o'clock, with no physical energy used up and with my day's work pretty well done.

I found out that if I arrived earlier in the morning I was immediately met by irritations, questions, jokes, callers, and the freshness and concentration with which one naturally wakes in the morning were scattered.

I have never known a business man who worked like this, but I have known some women who did. Perhaps not so systematically. The best saleswoman in the advertising business used to spend all of Sunday quite closed off from the rest of the world. Even her telephone bell was discon-

nected. A fashion editor spent Sunday in bed, with books and cigarettes and meager food.

But most business women haven't yet learned how to get rid of work. Women's training at home has always over-emphasized the importance of details, and so when she works outside she is afraid to let them slip out of her hands. She knows that an executive should not do a single thing which anybody else in the office can do for her. But between knowing a thing and doing it there is a long space. When I gave up my work I turned a large part of it over to a friend, who had held a job crammed with activity. The first few months of the new work exhausted her because she watched over and did a thousand things which I had never even noticed. She soon learned better. Her secretaries, like mine, came to have the kind of job which secretaries love. They telephoned to make appointments, both business and social; they bought everything for her that she did not have to select herself—everything but dresses, hats, and shoes. They bought railroad tickets, took dictation, and paid her bills. My dictation did not amount to much; I never wrote a letter that did not have to be written, and most of those were only a few lines.

Sometimes a woman is afraid to turn over de-

tails because she is jealous of her subordinates and fears they may displace her. But men are just as jealous from the same fear. In my early days as a stenographer women were jealous of me a good deal, but in all the years since then I met this only once—when one of my assistants lost a good chance because she envied me too much to work for me.

And men are jealous of women. When a man and a woman in an office are making equal amounts of money and the woman has more ability than the man, he is often jealous. And when she reaches the point where she makes more money than anybody else in the office, the situation becomes strained, friendships break, and new connections have to be made.

Once I was with a small agency where I liked many of the people and they were fond of me. After several years the annual statement showed that I had earned more money than the head of the firm. There was nothing unfair about my earning more money than he did, since on my commission arrangement I had succeeded in getting more business. But I understand why he felt resentful. A man is expected to do better than a woman. He is trained to feel ashamed when he doesn't. From that time things began to be strained and I had to break a business relation which I had

enjoyed very much. I lost a friend. . . . But this is not peculiar to business—it is life. I have had to struggle too much against a tendency to jealousy in myself to like having it directed against me.

CHAPTER XIX

"Conspicuous Waste"

WORKING on commissions made me independent of the advertising agencies who seemed to be my employers. My real employers were the advertisers. This changed my business relations abruptly, because now I represented the client and regarded the agency merely as a tool to do the work of the advertiser. The agency also looked at me in a new way, as the client's representative, and our positions of employer and employee were in reality reversed.

All my clients except one were slow to give me the business because I was a woman, but in other ways they were fair.

It so happened that every one of my customers was conservative in respect to economic and social theory. Indeed, they were all reactionary. During the war they were violently patriotic, while I was violently a pacifist. And we had many disputes about this. The words socialism and pacifism were to them like the word toadstool to a mushroom picker.

I was a pacifist—not anti-German or anti-

French, but against the stupidity of using a worn-out idea of nationality to fight the battles of financiers. I am a complete radical in my political and economic opinions. I look upon people as people; I do not see them as nations or dynasties.

I was always careful to tell my customers about my radical sympathies, but I hardly know why I did this . . . perhaps some obscure sense of fairness . . . mingled with defiance. I never lost any business on that account. My clients usually liked to consider my economic opinions a sort of joke. You see, if they could be looked at as merely funny, then one didn't have to stop and consider one's own opinions seriously.

Sometimes we would have humorously bitter discussions at luncheon; I mean arguments that were as hot as fire on the surface, but which floated, nevertheless, on an undercurrent of good humor.

This attitude had the effect of enlivening my luncheon discussions with my clients. Here is a typical argument with one of them.

"Well, how's the Bolshevist princess this morning?" he began. The nickname "Bolshevist princess" had been his own special invention for me.

"Oh, fine. Bright scarlet just now," I replied. "I've just heard a nice ——"

(I am repeating this conversation as accurately as I can from memory.)

"——I've just heard a nice story. About a line of French and German trenches that were so close together that the men got to be friendly with those on the other side. Occasionally one would send a message to the other saying, 'We're going to have an inspection this morning so we'll have to throw a few shells over you. Look out.' One morning the French heard that the Germans were hungry, so during the night they slipped out and left loaves of bread in front of the German position. Next morning the loaves of bread were back, each accompanied by a frankfurter."

Sad head-shaking on the part of my client. "I don't believe a word of it. Sentimental guff!"

"Can't you credit the human race with a little human kindness?" I demanded.

"I can't ——" he began, then suddenly changing his tone, he said: "Gosh! you do have funny ideas for a woman with a level head. Where d'you get 'em? By George! women are queer. . . . Women radicals!"

"Now don't say it's because I'm a woman. Women are, if anything, less radical than men." I thought of the experience of the Socialist party, that worked for woman suffrage for twenty years before any of the other parties would even listen to it.

"The Socialists got a nice lot of gratitude from

the women, didn't they?" I continued. "They've always believed in woman suffrage—and have worked for it. Now that women can vote—they vote for those who fought them hardest."

"Well, all right," he resumed. "Then it isn't because you're a woman."

A moment's reflection. "What gets me is," he went on, "the way you reason out your leveling ideas. Everybody on one dead level ——"

"I never said that," I interrupted.

"Why, you said the other day that Henry Ford and a street sweeper ought to be paid the same wages!" he expostulated.

"Oh no—you misunderstood me. I think the street sweeper ought to get more. Henry Ford is paid largely in pleasure in working on machinery; the street sweeper doesn't get any kind of pay except money."

"That sounds all very nice, but suppose it were applied to you? Do you think you oughtn't to get more money than a dishwasher here in this restaurant?"

"No, I ought to get less money. Why do I deserve any credit for having a little brains? Don't you suppose any fool would rather be bright and quick? And if my mind is more perceptive than others, I ought to be penalized for it, not paid—because I can enjoy a million things that a stupider

person doesn't even see, and I have the pleasant warmth of thinking I'm a little better than a fool. Why, it's ridiculous to reward people because they have the pleasure of being beautiful or able or swift. It's standing things on their heads."

My audience of one smiled cynically. "I suppose you mean that you'd like to lose all your special comforts and live like any workman?"

"No, I shouldn't like it at all—I'd hate it. But who am I that I should be considered, or anybody like me? We're just little people who live in comfort to-day and if we're wiped out or swept away or suffer, it doesn't matter. We're only a few and it doesn't matter so much what happens to us. It's what happens to millions who don't live in decency or comfort. And by the way, lots of them have just as good a brain as either you or I have."

"Now, look here," my client argued, "you're like a manicure I heard talking one day in Cleveland. Somebody was saying to her that he hoped Firpo would win against Dempsey; and she got kind of mad and said: 'Where d'you get that stuff? Ain't you got no patriotism?' 'Yes,' the man answered, 'just because he's a foreigner we ought to be glad to give a little better chance to a stranger. It's a civilized thing to do.' 'Gee!' the manicure giggled, 'you can prove anything if

you wrap a lot of fancy words around it!' You're wrapping a lot of fancy words around this."

These radical ideas are so far from the whole course of thought of the average man that in speaking of them you seem to be using a foreign language. The conversation then is like that between two people who think they are discussing something in common when, really, one is talking about the Epworth League and the other the mysteries of the fourth dimension.

Besides, most people don't like new ideas. Amiel says: "Humanity has always slain or persecuted those who have disturbed its selfish repose. Humanity improves only in spite of itself. . . . Sacrifice, which is the passion of great souls, has never been the law of societies. It is often by employing one vice against another—for example, vanity against cupidity, greed against idleness—that the great agitators have broken through conventional routine."

The conversation switched to efficiency. "The trouble with you radicals is that you don't consider efficiency," said my client. "No, you never think of that. The real reason why the country is run by big business is that business men are the most efficient class. I have no use for incompetency—and you radicals, present company excepted"—he

added, graciously—"are certainly an incompetent lot."

"Are they?" I said. "Forgive me for being so positive, but I must say that we have no data yet as to their ability, for we have never given them a chance to show it. I detest incompetence, too. It makes me fidgety ——"

I thought of my husband's opinion of bankers. He knows a great many of them, and he thinks their intellectual level is lower than that of any other class of people engaged in mental occupations. He calls them the "barbers of the intellectual world," and he contends that banking is the only highly profitable, white-collar, high-horse occupation that can be carried on successfully without any mental equipment at all.

I quoted this opinion.

"Well, I agree with you there," said my friend, unexpectedly. "I thought they were a wonderful lot myself until I had to deal with a lot of them in different parts of the country. They're a set of dumbbells. They don't know anything—finance or anything else."

"Still, you're willing to have them run the country, aren't you?"

"Well, I suppose so—they've got the money. They do know how to say 'No,' though—you know they do know that. They've got so much

money it doesn't matter about their being efficient. But we've got to run our business efficiently in this publishing game; we haven't got enough margin not to."

"All right, let's consider our own business, then," I went on. "I think the way we run business—our own business—is too incompetent for words. Take that credit department of yours. How many people have you got in it?"

It is the custom for publishers in the mail-order business to ship goods without advance payment to people who send in coupons from their advertising. Each of them has a department for investigating the credit of these coupon signers. It was to this department that I referred.

"About ten in that department," he answered.

"Then your collection department. Must be about thirty people."

"Yes," he replied.

"Harper's have two such departments. So have the Review of Reviews and Appleton's and Putnam's and a lot of others."

"I know what you're driving at. You think we ought to have one department among us all and have about fifty people doing the work instead of two hundred."

"Yes," I said. "That's it. Four or five of you

look into the credit and collect money from the same people all the time."

"Sure, I know that. Harper's tried to get us to have one common department. But it wouldn't work. First thing, we'd get one another's lists, and our lists are worth money."

The most valuable property of any magazine or mail-order house is its mailing list—people who have bought from the concern, and who are, usually its readiest future customers. So he settled back with the satisfaction of having said something unanswerable.

"But it would be a better arrangement, at that, wouldn't it," I argued, "if you weren't worried about some other publisher getting hold of your list?"

"Sure," he agreed, readily enough, "but that's the rub. We wouldn't feel safe with our valuable list of names in the hands of any kind of central bureau."

"Dear me," I remarked, solemnly, "in this age of business integrity and service to the public, do you mean to say that you would all be afraid of one another?"

He laughed. Business men who know you well usually laugh when these abstractions of high commercial morality are mentioned. "Huh!

Do you think I'm a Rotary Club or a get-together luncheon? Stop your kidding, young woman."

There has been a change in American business these last twenty years. In the old days, no one ever wrapped money-making eagerness in sweet words like *service*. Business men were frankly after money. They are still after money, but they know now that it is good policy to deliver something good to keep the customer. So they make better goods at better prices—because they have to. And they call that *service*. I don't know anything in modern business more offensive and shocking than this hypocritical talk of service.

There have been so many ludicrous fiascos in the practice of the religion of efficiency that able business men now use this word very little, but the smaller man still mouths it with satisfaction. There's a good deal of efficiency in a small way, such as the counting of stamps, the checking up of minor employees, and the use of arithmetical machines and mechanical devices of all kinds. But while this saving is going on, the larger wastes—and the really great opportunities for efficiency—are ignored.

While my friend was laughing over the absurdity of trusting his list of names to a co-operative bureau, I picked up a copy of a magazine lying on the table and happened to open it at a

big double-page advertisement in color of a well-known brand of ham. There was an appetizing piece of ham in a frying pan, and the image of smell and taste.

"What do you think of that for efficiency and service?" I asked him, as I passed the open magazine across the table.

He studied the advertisement awhile. "It looks good to me," he remarked.

"Well, do you think you pay less for that ham because the X Company spends several hundred thousand dollars a year in advertising it?"

"Of course," he asserted, promptly. "They sell so many of them."

You may smile at this, but I didn't, for I was used to that kind of argument. Such childish economic ideas in the best business circles get to be a matter of course.

"But suppose nobody ever advertised a ham," I went on. "You would eat ham just the same, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," he agreed.

"Do you think anybody eats more ham because it's advertised?"

"No, I suppose not."

"What you do is to eat more X hams. No more hams are eaten or produced, no more hogs are raised, are they?" I went on.

"No."

"All the advertising does is to get the X Company to sell more and somebody else to sell less; and naturally to the hams that they sell they've got to add the cost of their advertising."

"M-m-m."

"And here's an ad. of a tire," I went on. "I don't believe that all the tire advertising which has ever been printed has sold one single additional tire. Of course it's been mighty profitable to certain concerns, because it has helped them to sell their tires in place of the other fellows'. But they have had to raise their prices to pay the cost of the advertising. You pay for it every time you buy a tire. It's a pure waste that the public seems to enjoy for the pleasure of seeing some good-looking tire ads."

"Oh, I agree with you about the advertising of tires," he interrupted. "A man uses a tire until it wears out, and then he buys another. You can't increase the number by advertising."

"Exactly," I said. "Now understand me; I'm not blaming the X Company for advertising ham, or the Z Company for advertising tires, or anybody else for advertising sugar or flour. They are living under this system just as we are. They've got to do what they can. In their place I'd advertise hams, too. But for goodness' sake

don't let's fool ourselves into thinking that the thing's perfect just because it's so."

"I suppose some of the things you socialists have grabbed off from other people like the inheritance tax and the income tax are all right," he granted, "but when it comes to turning things upside down ——"

"You mean you don't like the words socialism or bolshevism or communism. You don't like those words, do you?"

"No, I don't," he admitted. "There's something disorderly about 'em. They mean a lot of turning upside down."

"Well," I gave up, "nobody ever convinced anybody by talk. . . . Time to go back to the office."

As far as I know, I never lost any business or any customers through these opinions. I have given up some business, but that was through my own action. And I convinced some reactionaries that one could be an economic revolutionary and yet at the same time have business sense.

If we radicals could show the people in the country who are making from five to fifteen thousand a year that there is common sense in the socialist idea, we would accomplish something, because these people have ability, they have sense; unlike the man who makes millions, they have

ideals aside from making money; and they direct the work of the world. They are beginning to be dissatisfied; they are beginning to have a feeling that it is not fair that they should be making a salary and be subordinate while the man who does not do any work takes off the cream. They now have a bitter hatred and distrust of working-people and they are afraid of radical ideas, because they sincerely believe them unsound and unsafe. Pressure is the thing that will make these people come around eventually, but a little time may be saved by convincing them of some things earlier while they still have power.

I have never had a customer who himself was a radical. I should have been glad to do for nothing for a liberal magazine what I was being paid to do for conservatives. I was never called on for such help, and when it was tentatively offered it was not welcomed.

I was never able to make any impression on Jewish clients, never was able to get an account from one of them. Except once (for six weeks) I have never had a Jewish employer. I got a sort of superstition about this after a while, and in the last few years never tried to get an account from a Jewish house.

I have a theory that may account for it. You see, I grew up among Jews who considered me a

sort of ugly duckling in character and in looks. The first people who liked my appearance, my manner, or my disposition were Gentiles. And even to-day if I am among many Jews, I again feel the awkward uneasiness of my youth, which made me either retire into a corner or lose my volatile temper. And so I suppose I become self-conscious and uppish.

My opinions on the Jewish question I think are hardly worth while. I do not look Jewish. My husband is not a Jew; so I no longer have a Jewish name. Usually it never occurs to anybody that I am Jewish until I speak of it myself. I never have felt as much discrimination as my friends have.

But all my customers knew I was Jewish; all my employers knew it. And yet I worked for several companies which I afterward found had rules against employing Jews. This curious contradiction between the attitude toward Jews as a whole and the attitude toward me, as well as the difference between my own experience and that of other Jews, has forced me to the conclusion that most people are unable to consider any fault or virtue in an abstract fashion. They must tie it to some person or group of people. So they find it convenient and easy to tie tags to Jews.

In the face of the fact that most of the Jews

of the world are miserably poor and that not one of its greatest money-makers is a Jew, they still insist that Jews have a vicious way of making all the money in sight. There are similar false abstractions about other races—the Scotch, for example. It isn't the idea that means anything to most people; it's the tag. Just so they may like the idea of state-owned railroads, but hate the tag, "state socialism in railway management."

I believe that most people do not hate Jews, not even those who talk about it. Otherwise they would hate me as a Jew. No, it is some quality which they tie to the Jew for convenience in thinking.

Besides, everyone has to look down on somebody. The emptier a man is of reasons for self-pride, the more ardently he "hates" Jews or Catholics or Germans or Americans or some other vague generality.

I know a young man, a Jew, who has a most intensely disagreeable personality. Everybody turns away from him. To save his self-respect he has assured himself that it is because he is a Jew, has changed his name and become something else —I don't know what. There is that danger when you belong to a persecuted race. But I know other Jews of lofty character and beautiful minds who suffer from discrimination because they look very

Jewish and because the dull average mind ties the tags to them at once.

I have encountered prejudice; I have often been hurt. I suppose instead of making me feel a victim it has made me a little more of a fighter than I might otherwise have been.

And every once in a while I remember how the German Jews among whom I grew up treated the Russian Jews in New York—with what contempt and jealous fear.

There is no logic in this. Like many other prejudices, it is outside reason. Why people should tie tags to those who look Jewish and not tie them to me because I don't look Jewish, even though they know I am a Jew, this is too deep in the region of human emotions for me to explain. And why people should refuse to employ Jews and then employ me I cannot explain. Partly, of course, because I have a certain talent they want. But partly they like me as a person. It is true that the people whom I know socially are naturally those who have no prejudices against any race, who like strange peoples and do their thinking for themselves. Perhaps if I had sought my friends among the non-thinkers of the world I would have had a much worse experience.

CHAPTER XX

Windows

ALL these years while I was evolving in a business way, my mind was marching on in another direction. I don't know why it marched at all, and I cannot see exactly the steps—but there are a few turns along the road that seem to have some special vividness.

When I was about fourteen a girl in my class in Boston invited me to her home for luncheon one Saturday. I had on a new brown dress with my first shoe-top-length skirt, but any little confidence that came from the new outfit deserted me when the first butler I had ever seen outside of Thackeray opened the wide door, through which I looked into great, high rooms. There was a feeling of space and an air of old shadows.

By the time we all sat down to luncheon I was stiff with fear. I could hardly speak. The magnificence of everything and the formality of the service dazed me. I was frightened by the two maids in caps and aprons; oddly enough, I was most impressed by the tea service, which stood in solid silver panoply at the right of the hostess.

She asked me, "How do you like your tea?"

"Oh, strong, please," I managed to get out.

It never had occurred to me in my life that anybody would ask me how I liked my tea. Tea was made on the stove at home; it was poured into cups and set down before one. I was under an impression that we always drank it strong, and when my friend's sister put what was really strong tea before me I could hardly drink the bitter concoction. I managed somehow to swallow a little.

The whole luncheon was a torture to me. Yet it left with me a desire to serve tea beautifully, as I had read of it in books. To this day I believe I get a little more pleasure than anybody else from an exquisite tea tray with sugar and lemon and cloves and maraschino cherries and iced cakes and little sandwiches. I like these on a tray, whether I use them or not.

There was another girl to whose home I went often. Peggy Smith's father was a Congregational preacher and not well-to-do, but not poor as we were and they had a wide old house in Roxbury, in whose large rooms everything was shabby. This shabbiness looked as though it didn't feel ashamed; as though it rather enjoyed its worn comfort. Ours was different. Opening a bureau drawer, we did it gingerly because

the caster might come off, or the handle, and if we dusted a figurine on the mantel we were careful lest its wabbly head should fall. In Peggy's home bureaus and chairs were solid, but the carpet looked used and the books looked used. It did not look so emphatically clean as my own home, where everything always shone. The stove in our kitchen glittered; the kettle was bright; the almost bare mantel was spotless. The chairs in the parlor stood straight against the wall, their black wood polished till it gleamed. There was never anything awry. In the other girl's home everything was a little careless and comfortable. This stiff spotlessness is necessary for the poor who wish to be clean. A softer comfort requires more effort than an overworked mother can give.

In the homes of people like ourselves there were painted eggshells and clusters of sachets which hung from the chandeliers, and framed baby's hair made into a tree with bead flowers. My mother, fortunately, disliked this sort of thing. There was one house I used to like to go to when I was a very little girl—because on its mantel stood brass candlesticks and a brass mortar and pestle from Germany. And we were given coffee in straight china cups with little colored stripes around the edge.

But in this home in Roxbury everything ap-

pealed to me, especially the long low bookcases against the walls, a few prints and an occasional bust. This house gave me a childish ideal which I meant to turn into reality some day.

When I began working for a living I had this ideal of a home. I thought that some day I would live in a wide, shabby house, with busts and prints and books. But it seemed a far-away dream. Everything I wanted in life seemed remote—everything either material or spiritual—whether it was an open fire or personal beauty or charm of manner or leisure or freedom from self-consciousness or seeing the world's lovely strange things. All seemed so hard to get that I had to find some temporary refuge. There were two—one was books; the other public affairs: international events, national politics. When you don't like to look at your own affairs, it is easier to become interested in Russia or Siam. The daily newspapers were my comforters and entertainers. Going home from work on the train, it was a rest to bury my thoughts in the last election in Scandinavia or the doings of the ever-busy tribesmen in Morocco. It was more interesting to imagine how these would affect the life and destinies of other nations, than it was to watch the other tired, ugly-looking people in the subway.

So I had two widely separated dissatisfactions.

There was the one with myself as a human being, with my room and its yellow oak furniture, with my lack of friends. At the same time I felt an almost equally intense misery with the tinsel show of Theodore Roosevelt, or the trick that had destroyed the Russian revolution in 1905!

Between these widely divergent interests—in myself and in the world at large—floated the rest of my world. In it were the companies for which I worked, the general publishing business, and business as a whole. I wanted the department in which I worked to do well because that revolved around me each day; I wanted the United States to be well governed, New York to have good laws, the Standard Oil Company to be a public servant. But I didn't care what happened to Merrill & Baker or to the book business as a whole. A year after leaving Merrill & Baker the news that the firm had failed did not move me in the least. Why should it? Nobody had demanded of me any responsibility in connection with Merrill & Baker. They were neither remote enough to distract me from my personal affairs nor near enough for me to seem a part of them.

Getting my pictures of life from books, I thought that it would have been romantic and interesting to be just a little poorer—that is, poor enough to have to live in a garret and cook break-

fast over an oil stove and starve a little. The bare, clean, and well-fed poverty in which I lived seemed uninspired and dull. It was the longing of youth for some poignant experience, something to dramatize. Like all young people, I felt that mine was the dullest and most commonplace life it was possible to live; that nearly everybody else was living a life of glorious adventure or glorious suffering, while I subsisted on the bread and butter of monotony.

During those early years I was not much troubled about the meaning of life. It seemed to me that there was so much life, so many years ahead, so many possibilities, such a complete certainty of great rich experiences. There was no room in me for the mysticism which comes only with a feeling of futility—to some at fifteen, to some at twenty, to some at forty. Besides, like most children of foreign parents, I took American patriotism and materialism as serious ideals and was ashamed of illogical thoughts and emotions. Getting ahead seemed to me an aim in itself—a virtuous aim, an ideal to which it was worth while to sacrifice.

All this lay comfortably side by side with those other ideas in my brain which I got from books. You see, it did not occur to me for one moment that honesty and success, that idealism and money-

making, straight thinking and rich living, could not be synonymous. Believing naïvely in all I had been taught at school and by the newspapers, I thought that these antagonistic elements made a perfectly harmonious whole.

In the beginning I had been a young girl curious, eagerly interested, and with a more vivid mental life than most girls. A little less interested in myself because I didn't like myself well enough, and a little more interested in outer things. It was necessary to develop in some direction. Energy was bursting from me. My mind and my spirit had to have some food. I do not know in what direction this energy might have turned. Probably not toward anything to be done with the hands, since my hands are inept. It is possible that I might have been either a teacher or a writer, because I wanted urgently to do both. I tried hard to get a chance to teach, but did not have the necessary diplomas.

When I was fourteen years old I sent my first story to the *Atlantic Monthly*. How they must have laughed at it! It was very sad, and wound up in a graveyard with a returned and remorseful husband weeping over the tombs of his deserted wife and children. It was in the best Victorian manner.

Fifteen hours a week of intensive study of

Latin, French, and Greek, and no English composition, so wrecked my English that when I got out of the Latin School I could not write a sentence without unwieldy Latin constructions. I would begin, "Having therefore considered the matter thoroughly, he thereupon decided . . ." It took me years of writing advertising to overcome this.

No doubt there was another reason why I did not write, though I did not realize it at the time. The fashion of sweetness and light of that day was impossible for me to follow. I really tried to do it, because it seemed that Hamilton Wright Mabie and those others must know what was good. I had no confidence in my own literary judgment, anyway, and felt ashamed because I did not like Meredith or Balzac. Everybody else thought these among the greatest writers of all time, and I was so much in awe of them and so little sure of myself that I felt that this divergence proved a weakness in my own literary taste. I thought my mind was perhaps not serious enough. Instead of considering that they were certainly not great writers for me as an individual, because they gave me nothing that I needed, I assumed that my taste was at fault. It never occurred to me that whether a writer was good or not depended entirely on the needs of the reader. I thought it was

a rigid affair—the writer was good or not good, and that was the end of it. And he was good or not good to everybody.

Also plot seemed important and my mind didn't work on plots. It is possible that if I had been twenty years old in 1925 I might have written naturally and easily.

Later, when I did learn to write more fluently, it was impossible to be concerned with the immediate problems of the advertising business and at the same time with the writing of fiction—to be worried by the day-to-day needs of a job and to be sufficiently remote from it to create anything else. Though I tried time after time in the years that followed to write something that was not advertising, self-consciousness gripped me and made me as word-tied as shyness makes a child tongue-tied.

Out of the cloud of general ideas of beauty through which I tried to find my way on my business road, there came now one message, now another, which would not be ignored. In 1906, for instance, it began to seem to me imperative that I should know something about pictures. I was occasionally buying drawings for advertising, and through this had learned something of technique in art. But this was mere mechanical detail, just enough to invite to a deeper knowledge. I bought

a little book, called *How to Know a Good Picture*, and with it I went to the Museum of Art.

Pictures had always brought me emotional experiences. I can get a sort of intoxication from looking at beautiful colors. Some day I am going to play with dyes. There is no one in all the world I have envied more than William Morris. But the little book taught me to look for special things. It intellectualized my pleasure and so increased its emotional aspects. I had no precise taste in art, but I did definitely dislike Raphael and Rubens, why Rubens, I cannot now imagine. The greatest pleasure came to me from Rembrandt, Franz Hals, and Corot. No park or woods ever seemed the same to me after looking at Corot, just as in later years single trees took on a new individuality and power after I saw one though the eyes of Picasso. Perhaps this is what Wilde meant when he said nature copies art. But as an education in art my method had disadvantages. Like most books of the sort, this one dealt entirely with the very old, with what was considered classic. The Impressionists were not mentioned; I did not even know the name of Manet. Such blanks are common in self-education.

Years before I had learned something of sculpture in connection with our study of Greek and Roman history at school. The clear and beautiful

chronological arrangement of statuary in the old Boston Museum had been a great help.

Ordinarily I detest museums. It is so nearly impossible to look at one room and come out—a flash of color, a marble line leads you through another doorway, until legs and feet and eyes are aching, and the brain is sick with impressions.

Why doesn't some one build a new kind of museum, entirely made up of small buildings? Each building would have either one room or a small group of rooms. And no room would contain more pictures than a similar one in a beautiful home. Anyway, little individual buildings—so that when you had gone through one the sunlit outdoors would keep you from going into another. There is enough room in Central Park for such beauty. Why should Greek temples be shown in a small model inside a gloomy hall? Why not a full Greek temple outdoors in the Park, and the statuary of the time disposed as it should be?

It would cost money—well—I'd be willing to let some vain millionaire put his name on the Greek temple, if his sense of the ridiculous did not restrain him.

In music I had no interest at that time. I never went to a concert or an opera. I don't know why, since I enjoy music keenly now. It probably was this: there were a number of doors in my mind

which I kept carefully shut—one of these led the way to music, another to mysticism, another to poetry. I did not quite dare to step inside these doors, lest I should never come back to the sensible little hall in which I lived. This closing of doors was not conscious or planned—I had only a glimmer of what I was doing.

But naturally these things came into my life one after another, slowly and with more and more insistence. It was to Swinburne that I owed my first feeling for poetry. It was the New World Symphony played by the Philharmonic Orchestra that gave me my first richer pleasure in music. And it was Tolstoi who opened to me the doors of mysticism.

In one way, no doubt, the rebellion against all such emotions as those which come from poetry or music was part of my rebellion against the environment of my childhood. I took in rather tragic earnest the teachings at school which made it appear that everything foreign was disgraceful. There was a Russian who lived with us once as a boarder—the only one we ever had—and who played the violin charmingly. I remember one sweet little song which I have never heard since—"*Ein neues Jahr ist angefangen.*" I was very little then and music came to mean to me a foreign

accomplishment—not, of course, the music of Sousa—that was all right—it was respectably American. Because of the poverty in which I had grown up, everything Russian, German, or Polish meant failure. Philosophy was impractical. Oh, I had a beautiful set of practical ideas! With resentment I think now of the beauty I missed. And yet perhaps these things were a little more beautiful because they were reached in maturity, just as the Bible has always been more fascinating to me because I did not read it until I was twenty-eight. This is probably true of everything except poetry.

All this slow getting rid of repressions made me ready for friendship, and for the first time in ten years I found women who became my friends. I had grown hungry for the friendship of women. I had met some, but I myself was too closed off within my locked doors, to be a friend.

I did not really want the friendship of women more than I had before; I was merely more conscious of that want. Emotionally I was waking up —coming to life. In 1913 I was married. And suddenly I realized that most of the remote ideals that I had had when I began to work had turned into reality. I had a little leisure, a little more self-confidence, a better home than I had wanted!

I had travel and friends,—a life rich in emotion and intellect. But I did not stop to think how lucky I was, because a new set of desires and ideals were already full blown.

CHAPTER XXI

Mail the Coupon

AWAY back in 1904, when I had been working for W. E. W. for a few months, he said to me one day, "Do you ever see the Sunday *World*?"

"No. I read the *Herald*."

"Well, you ought to read the *World*," he went on. "Somebody who signs himself O. Henry has a short story in it every Sunday. His stuff is great. Crackling, terse, dramatic stories. It's surprising to find them in a newspaper. I wish I knew who O. Henry is. I've asked the fellows on the newspapers, but none of them seems to know."

So I came to read and like O. Henry, who crept into popular favor so slowly and simply through the pages of the Sunday *World*. It was years after that before he was well known—and before his books began to be published. At his death Doubleday, Page & Company made a uniform edition of his work and the *Review of Reviews* sold it by mail.

By that time the whole aspect of mail-order

book-selling had changed. It was no longer a business of high prices and fantastic claims, as it had been in the old days. The selling of an author like O. Henry by mail was a departure. Before that time only instructive books or so-called classics and high-sounding fiction writers, dead for fifty years, had even been sold in a set on installments. Bulwer Lytton and Eugene Sue were puffed out in price by elaborate and showy illustrations. Encyclopedias were sold as fast as they were made. Also books about nature and travel, or memoirs or biographies. And mountains of Abbott's sentimental stories of kings and queens lie unopened in garrets all over the United States.

One set of books in the Merrill & Baker list had been called *Courtiers and Favorites of Royalty*. In the ordinary binding these were five dollars a volume, but there were limited morocco editions running up to a thousand dollars a volume. The books were dull French court memoirs of the eighteenth century, so advertised as to seem salacious. What they accomplished except to acquaint the American people with the name of Du Barry, I do not know. In 1902, we thought the advertising of this set almost indecent. It showed a head of Du Barry and intimated that memoirs about the French court might be interesting. But

those were days when no woman's magazine would publish a picture of a woman in a corset.

To-day comparatively few sets of instructive books are sold. And if they are sold they are read. Correspondence courses have cut into their sale.

Shakespeare, Scott, Thackeray, Poe, Dumas, Hugo, Dickens, all went big. Thousands of sets were sold of Mühlbach, a sentimental German writer of historical romances. About her trash hundreds of pages of advertising ran in the magazines and millions of circulars were mailed. This was only about eighteen years ago. Who to-day has even heard the name of Mühlbach?

Until 1913 sets had usually been sold for their physical appearance, because they were thick and high and broad, because they were bound in half calf. We convinced the reader that he should buy Ridpath's History because the sets that had already been sold would reach around the world; and he had to buy a set of Dickens because so many of them had been put out that if piled one on the other they would overtop Mount Everest. We really sat down and figured on the weight, volume by volume, of sets of Thackeray or Ridpath before we put these statistics in the advertisements. We were meticulously honest about this detail. "Are you sure," J. C. Clark asked

jokingly, "that you're not a hundred feet out of the way?"

Gradually it became impossible to sell this kind of books. The public would have no more of them. The public had all the classics it could carry on its shelves. On top of that came a financial panic and the mail-order book business had almost died when the *Review of Reviews* pulled it out of a coma by injecting a bit of news into it—the discovery of the Brady Pictures. Later the *Review of Reviews* felt that a similar news feature might make O. Henry a welcome change to a public that had grown weary of old and rather stale mental food. So they allowed the sets of classics with their heroines to languish and splashed into the magazines with O. Henry, a modern author. They abandoned the de luxe bindings at fat prices for the simple cloth-bound book, at a reasonable figure.

We sold a few thousand sets. But such a sale is of no value to a mail-order publishing house. The books must be sold by the tens of thousands, or better still by the hundreds of thousands. To do that, it is necessary to force the sale; to be so persuasive in advertising that you induce people to buy your books who had had no interest in them before. This is difficult—there is no harder advertising job. Consider for yourself—everybody

has endless demands on his money (if he has unlimited money he doesn't buy sets of books on installments). To make him buy your books you must persuade him that he wants them more than something else he wanted the day before.

So, in spite of the novelty of the writer, and the moderate price of the books, the O. Henry sale halted. The *Review of Reviews* was my client—the more books it sold the more commissions I would make. I identified its interests with my own, and in talking of my work I came to think of that company and myself as "we." Our education in the book business had been the same. So at first we advertised O. Henry's literary quality, the number of his sets that had been sold, and every kind of thing except the stories themselves. Still the advertising didn't go. It began to look as though the sale of O. Henry was about to end and his popularity to disappear. But neither had really begun. By what seemed at the time a trifling advertising device, we started a sale of millions of copies of O. Henry—and sent his reputation around the world. And we also caused a revolution in the methods of advertising books by mail. None of us had any idea that we were creating such a revolution; it was part of the day's work, a small thing, more or less accidental.

A year with the Presbrey Agency and work on

all kinds of products remote from books had given me a certain freshness of ideas. So one day it occurred to me that, after all, these O. Henry stories were spanking good yarns which people really liked. It seemed to me that perhaps—just barely perhaps—people might be induced to buy O. Henry for what was in the books rather than for what was outside them.

I prepared an advertisement. It had a pile of books on the side, and on top of the books sat a girl with tears running down her face, looking at a photograph of Lord Kitchener. The caption was "Finish This Story for Yourself." And the advertisement began:

> The girl got $6 a week and was lonely. "Piggy"—you can imagine his kind—was waiting downstairs. He knew where champagne and music could be had. But that night she didn't go. That was Lord Kitchener's doing. But another night!

In these few lines we caught a little of that spirit of O. Henry which has made him so popular, a bit of pathetic absurdity, a wry smile, a hint of sex in the purest manner. I left in mystery the idolatry for the vague heroic plaster figure which the girl called Lord Kitchener, on which she leaned for strength. And the advertising contained a trick. As briefly as possible I gave a little outline

of the beginning of a story, arousing the reader's curiosity as to how it ended. I was careful not to mention the title of the particular story, lest he go to some library to satisfy that curiosity. My memory went back to the family story paper with the first page of Laura Jean Libbey's stories. I remembered how I had been filled with anguish because I was never able to know what happened to the beautiful heroines. I hoped in this copy that the reader would also feel such anxious curiosity that he would be compelled to send the coupon.

That is just what did happen and has happened ever since in book advertising of the same sort. The girl sitting on the books turned out to be the most successful single piece of copy I ever wrote in my life. I suppose before we got through with it the *Review of Reviews* spent half a million dollars on this one advertisement.

It was a revolution. "Human interest" had marched into book advertising. And it had the experience that attends the birth of all revolutions. I might have been trying to upset a political dynasty—or attacking the rights of property.

"I don't know—I don't know," the client hesitated; "it's very sensational."

"No, it isn't—it's just new," I claimed.

"But do you think it's dignified enough for the

Review of Reviews? You know how Dr. Shaw feels about things we say over the signature of the magazine."

"Just as dignified as the books themselves," . . . I held.

The *Review of Reviews* finally tried an experiment—placed the advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Its success astonished all of us. The real sale of O. Henry began right there. Though I had fought hard for my copy, I was surprised to find how ready the public was to buy an author for what he had to say. That advertising sent people also by the thousands to buy single volumes of O. Henry in the bookstores—a sale from which the *Review of Reviews* gained nothing.

Since then it has become the accepted custom of publishers to sell sets of books for their contents rather than for their binding.

Our new kind of advertising made it possible to spread the praise of O. Henry in newspapers and magazines all over the United States. And later Mark Twain in a bigger campaign. This advertising appeared in the literary sections, the rotogravure and colored supplements of newspapers, and in most of the magazines read by men. Only one order in ten came from women. And almost none came from farms or from working-people.

I can picture for you the kind of home to which most often our books went. A smaller town, or a suburb of a great city—Scarsdale or Evanston. A comfortable house that cost from ten to twenty-five thousand dollars. The men earning a living, the daughters teaching, the sons at school or in some law office. A pleasant porch—part of it screened off for dining—a vegetable garden—some currant bushes—a flowering vine. In the living room two bookcases with glass doors. Perfect bathrooms. Good lights. Comfortable chairs. Comfortable talk. Pleasant manners. Cotton batting around the talk—the manners—the pictures—the books—lest a bit of reality should creep in. These were strange people to me. But I had to learn all about them because it was to their shelves that the books of my clients were likely to go.

Working-people in America buy few books. When they do, they usually buy serious ones, on sociological or political questions. Wealthy people buy their books at the bookstores or from interior decorators in New York who supply books, in just the right shape and color, to suit the other decorations of a room.

The most joy that ever I had from the writing of book-advertising copy came from Mark Twain. I loved Mark Twain. I was delighted when Har-

per & Brothers turned over this advertising to me. It presented a new problem, and that was welcome.

Plot with Mark Twain is unimportant; his spirit has to be brought out in another way. His wife called him "Youth." Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer—these are youth personified. *Innocents Abroad* is young America looking at old civilizations. Those later books which have won the approval of the critics—aren't they the rather muddled but intuitive mind of youth playing with the world's problems? So in writing about Mark Twain I called back to the reader the feeling of his own boyhood. The advertisements were always young. They were usually about boys. There was one called, "Hello, Huck!", in which I recorded a memory of my own childhood. This was the most successful advertisement we had. It began:

> Recall that golden day when you first read *Huckleberry Finn*. How your mother said, "For goodness sake, stop laughing aloud over that book. You sound so silly." But you couldn't stop laughing.

There were two successful ones for which I still have a weakness. One began this way:

> Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer swears they will keep mum about this and they wish they may Drop down dead in their tracks if they ever tell and Rot.

The other showed two boys ready to fight, but each drawing back—and read:

YOU'RE AFRAID.
I ain't afraid.
You are.
I ain't.
You are.

There was one headed "He Walked with Kings," on which the *Atlantic Monthly* commented, to our surprise:

Here is a passage from an advertisement which has run in dozens of current magazines. Where in all literature will you find more magnificent cadence or a greater atmosphere of loftiness?

He could not know, standing there in his bare feet and his rough clothes, with his little schooling, that kings would do him honor when he died, and that all men who read would mourn a friend.

He could not dream that one day his work would stand in Chinese, in Russian, in Hebrew, in Hungarian, in Polish, in French, in many languages he could not read—and from humble doorman to proudest emperor, all would be gladdened at his coming.

He could not know that through it all he would remain as simple, as democratic, as he was that day as a boy on the Mississippi.

This advertisement still clung to the little-boy idea. It showed Samuel Clemens as a ragged

barefoot boy and as a handsome successful man. It is the little boy's idea of a great life, of fame. Quite unconsciously I treated Mark Twain as a serious writer, because he was one to me. But we decided later that that attitude had helped the sale. It is impossible to sell a humorist as such in a set of books.

Advertising people thought that a man had written the Mark Twain copy. But perhaps only a woman who had no sons could have found just this particular pleasure in writing these advertisements. Or perhaps only a girl who had spent a childhood in wishing herself a boy.

There were dozens of other advertisements. Some were failures and none of us exactly knew why; I don't know why to this day. Neither my clients nor myself were able to have any feeling of certainty about whether an advertisement was good or not. We were right more often than we were wrong, otherwise the affair would have been a sad one, but we frequently had a low opinion of an advertisement which turned out well and a high opinion of failures. It is like deciding in advance whether a play is going to succeed or not. Our whole conclusion after years of working at that kind of thing was that the longer we worked at it the less we knew about it.

There was one showing Huckleberry Finn climbing down the wall of a house which was headed, "Huck Runs Away"; it began:

It was such a nuisance to have to put on a collar for Sunday and black his boots and wash his face every single day, to say nothing of his ears, . . . etc.

This was a failure, while one showing a rough, tousle-headed small boy with a hand waving in the air and the big caption, "Hey, Tom!" was a success.

These advertisements were all tried out in the same periodicals and at the same time of the year. It is the practice of the business to try out each advertisement in one or two media somewhere before spending much money on it. The sign of a good mail-order advertiser is that he doubts his own judgment.

We had the same baffling experiences with O. Henry. The girl on the books brought in the biggest returns. Next to that the most successful advertisement was written by one of my assistants, who headed it "When the Rattlesnake Struck." It began:

JUDGE:

When you sent me up for four years, you called me a rattlesnake. Maybe I am one—anyhow, you hear me rattling now. One year after I got to the pen, my daughter died of—well, they said it was poverty and the disgrace together.

You've got a daughter, Judge, and I'm going to make you know how it feels to lose one. I'm free now, and I guess I've turned to rattlesnake all right. Look out when I strike.

Yours respectfully,

RATTLESNAKE.

But there were advertisements of O. Henry which looked just as promising and yet went flat when published. Sometimes we would give a little twist to the advertisement which would turn it from a failure to a success. There was one which showed a man kneeling before a woman in a wedding gown. In the background stood another man, looking shocked. The copy read:

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

She had gone to change into her traveling dress. A few moments later he found her in her room—the woman he had just made his wife—and his best friend. What would you have done? What did he do? Find out from the story told by O. Henry.

The advertisement proved a failure. We changed the caption to "If This Happened on Your Wedding Night," and this caption brought in the orders.

Even more difficult it is to decide in advance which writers can be sold in sets by mail, and which can't. The old days of "classic" writers and solid educational works are over. The set-buying public wants more modern books. Not

modern in the sense in which this word is used by the literary world. Nobody would dream of trying to sell the work of D. H. Lawrence or James Joyce by the coupon route. You cannot sell Tolstoi that way. It is possible that, now that Anatole France is dead, somebody will try to sell sets of his books by mail. It would be a good gamble.

Most of us came to have a superstition which was put into words by one of my clients after a frosty reception to W. W. Jacobs and Joel Chandler Harris: "Oh, I guess I like them too well myself. Nothing goes that I like."

Richard Harding Davis went well, but Stevenson only after we had cheapened him. This was a disappointment. We had prepared such glamorous advertising of Stevenson with dashing pirates by Howard Pyle, and gory captions like "One More Step and I'll Blow Your Brains Out." But the public didn't want Stevenson's pirates. With some disgust we finally succeeded in forcing Stevenson down the throat of the public by the use of such headlines as, "He Wanted the Woman I Love", "Husband or Lover—Which Did She Save?"

Arthur B. Reeve and Mary Roberts Rinehart both write mystery and detective stories. Arthur B. Reeve's were successfully sold by mail, Mrs.

Rinehart's were a failure. We used similar methods for both. Was it possible that Mrs. Rinehart's did not go because she is a woman and the thought of a woman's work in a set did not seem sufficiently serious to buyers? One of our arguments in selling Arthur B. Reeve was that Wilson (then President), and ex-President Roosevelt both read mystery and detective stories in their spare time. The inference was that if these stupendous intellects could relax into the mazes of a mystery yarn you could, too, without serious danger to your future in business. You would be excused by the men associated with you for this literary diversion. I suppose that if President Coolidge should come out with a statement that he reads a poem by Swinburne every day, the business man could afford to read poetry without losing his standing.

We made bad guesses about Edith Wharton, Kipling, and Roosevelt. It was easy enough to get orders for Mrs. Wharton's novels, but the books came back almost as fast as they went out. It is not wise to advertise a set of books in a sensational fashion if the author is not sensational. The coupon-senders found that Mrs. Wharton was far more serious than the advertising which had seduced them.

As for Roosevelt, the public heard so much of

what he was saying in the newspapers that it did not want to send in the coupon even for free examination of his too, too solid writings.

The Kipling failure puzzled us at first. After he lost his position with intellectual readers, when these had to say, "Yes, he's a *great* writer, but he's stupid," then it began to be easy to sell Kipling by mail. The people who "send the coupon" are not readers of magazines of intellectual leadership, and the reputation of a new author takes years to reach them. It is only when a writer begins to appear in news stories that they hear of him, and this is often after he has ceased to make an appeal to the literary public.

Now the instant a rule like this is laid down, an exception pops up. There is one good set of books which in the last few years has upset all calculations about this mail-order book-buying public—and that is Wells's *Outline of History*. Hundreds of thousands of sets have been sold by mail. It is true that it has always been possible to sell a history of the world; nothing else can explain the extraordinary sale of the Ridpath History, stupid as it is. After the war the public felt a real need for a new history. And along came Wells. To coupon-senders his *Outline* was a complete education in four small volumes. It brought a sense of proportion to many an ardent patriot.

But it was not possible to advertise even the Wells books with the dignity they deserved.

It was agreeable enough advertising Wells or Shaw or *Asia Magazine*—the last with mysterious Chinese or Arabic lettering and captions like, "When the Nations Whisper!" or "At the Crossroads of the World." And it was satisfying to write advertisements about Margaret Sanger's book on birth control.

But the mail-order book business became more and more difficult until it was necessary to use copy like "Battling Against a Human Vampire," or "'Sold! She's Yours, Master,' Muttered the Trembling Slave-Dealer." The only way either I or my copywriters were able to do such copy was by turning it all into an elaborate joke.

"Send the coupon"—"Send the coupon"—"Do not miss this opportunity"—how many times have I written those words! How many times have I seen them in type! I grew so weary of their insistent chorus, of their trivial plea. In the last few years of my business life I seldom wrote a mail-order book advertisement myself—I just could not do it. The enthusiasm which was necessary had gone from me. But I found it possible to train a number of very bright young people who in the beginning had just as much fun out of it as I had ever had.

CHAPTER XXII

Writing Copy

COPYWRITERS are people who in another time would have been preachers or teachers or perhaps actors. My own best advertising writing was dictated walking up and down in the tone and manner of a political exhorter.

To be a really good copywriter requires a passion for converting the other fellow, even if it is to something you don't believe in yourself. No doubt the preacher who seems insincere is often dominated by this desire to convert people. This is an emotion in itself and has little to do with its object. I might some day have a canned soup to advertise. The whole idea of selling a soup would bore me, but after I had investigated the merits of that particular soup for a little while I would find myself excited at the thought of forcing millions of people to eat it. And I could believe that it was the most wonderful soup in the world. Then when the frenzy passed nothing could induce me to eat this soup, no matter how good it really might be.

Once a great American writer whose books had

a small sale asked me whether he could not make a living on the side by writing advertising.

"Sherwood Anderson did," he said.

I had to tell him no. "You would write it beautifully, exquisitely indeed—but you would not want to make your reader do anything, or believe anything. You have none of the almost painful moral earnestness, which must go into the writing of advertising."

Copywriters work with a sort of cynical passion. The glories of so many products are brought before them; they are asked to be enthusiastic today about this soap, to-morrow that talcum powder, next week some automobile. They are told:

"Write down and not up to your audience."

"No, this paragraph won't do—it's too logical. They don't buy that way."

"Make them cry."

"Make them mad."

"Make them jealous."

"Make them envious."

"Don't try to be funny."

"Don't try to be clever."

Other qualities besides a passion for conversion are needed by the good advertising copywriter. One is facility with the pen. Writing must be to him a natural expression of individuality. He should have a certain amount of business sense.

. . . Just what business sense is I don't know exactly. It isn't merely shrewdness, it is a sort of sense of business values. Suppose you handed a copywriter the work of two different advertisers and left to him to choose which he'd do first. The one with business sense would somehow instinctively feel that one of the two would mean more money to the company for which he is working; and therefore perhaps to himself. The other would not have this intuition. One would have business sense, the other would not.

Copywriters are very much the most intelligent people that I have ever met in the business world. I do not mean that they are the shrewdest—far from it—but they have more active minds, more insight, and more emotional intelligence than other groups of people in business.

In writing good advertising it is necessary to put a mood into words and to transfer that mood to the reader—it is just as necessary to do this in advertising as it is in the short story, indeed more so. In a story you have to give the reader pleasure or emotion or sensation. In an advertisement you have to do this, too, but you must also make him walk out and buy your product. Therefore behind good advertising there must be an intense driving force. Perhaps it is this use of intense force long continued which makes

nearly all good advertising copywriters, when they are forty, either go into some other business or hire somebody else to do the writing.

As the copywriter has far less space to play with than the legitimate fiction writer, his pen is forced into a severely powerful style. Every word has to be paid for. Words are gold. This compression keeps many of these young men and women from writing anything else but advertising. The compression makes it hard to write a story or an article. In these one must play with an idea and expand it. In a piece of advertising one must extract its meat and condense that. And advertising writing is done for a vast public, so that the vocabulary automatically becomes narrow and small, and it takes much practice in other writing to add to this limited vocabulary, or even to regain a lost one.

When I had something entirely new to sell, it was sometimes hard to get in the right mood, to make the words march in the right rhythm. In these emergencies poetry was a help. For the baby food I remember I turned to Mrs. Browning's "*The Cry of the Children.*" For the Brady War Pictures I read Kipling, especially "*England*" and the "*Recessional.*" The marching rhythm of these jingoistic poems was exactly what I wanted for this American patriotic set of books. Oscar

Wilde was helpful in writing about cosmetics. In selling Mark Twain I turned to the author himself for the rhythm of my copy, as I did also for O. Henry.

After three years of working on commission I had too much else to do to write much copy. My methods of work were so peculiar and different from those of everybody else in business, and my own ideas of advertising were so individual, that I could not employ people who had been trained in other agencies. So I chose inexperienced young people and taught them myself. I loved this part of my work. It was inspiring to teach open-minded young men and women with imagination and a facile pen.

I wonder what makes so many young college graduates eager to go into the advertising business? Does it seem such a gold mine to outsiders? Or does it seem to them a short road to literature? I suppose a little of both. So many came to see me. Most of them had no fitness for the work, but how were they to know that? I cannot lay down any rule about which were best fitted for copywriting—men or women, college graduates or those with home-grown education. It depends on the person. The graduate of a university has a better start in his background and training in the use of words, but

he is apt to lose the advantage of this start soon. One of the best copywriters I have ever had was a stenographer who had taught herself in extension summer courses; and another was a young man who had been hired to run errands and had not even gone through high school—he had no education at all in the usual sense of the word. I found these equally good, but no better than the college graduates whom I trained at other times. One good copywriter had been a teacher. One had taken a course in writing advertising at Columbia University, but what he learned there was useless to us.

I was fond of these young people and they were fond of me, and with two exceptions they turned into good copywriters. Yet I think I demanded an enormous quantity of work when I was in the mood to work, and a high quality of accomplishment. And I had a rather peppery disposition.

There were two things which I did that apparently offset this. When there was not much to do I did not allow the people who did creative work even to stay in the office. I made them go off and amuse themselves. I also saw that they got full credit for the work they did, not merely from the agency, which paid their salaries, but from the customers on whose accounts they worked.

When I engaged a copywriter I asked what

seemed odd questions. Many a time the applicant for a job has looked at me a little dazed. Corinna, one of my best copywriters, who had worked for me for years, said to me once: "I'll never forget the day you hired me. I thought you were the queerest woman who ever lived."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well," she went on, "you looked so indifferent and you asked me such extraordinary things. That was in 1917. I came in to see you one day with a letter from a friend of yours. You looked insolent and bored beyond words."

"Oh, I remember now," I said. "I had a dreadful headache, that's why I looked that way. One has either to look bored or insolent when one has a headache."

"Well," replied Corinna. "You looked both. I certainly felt small. Anyway, the next thing you did was to say, 'Please take off your hat.' And when I looked at you—too surprised to move for a moment—you told me that you wanted to see the shape of my head."

"Of course I wanted to see the shape of your head. Anybody employing other people ought to be able to judge a little about the applicant from the formation of the forehead and head. I like people with broad, high foreheads, with idealism and intelligence. And there is some-

thing about the shape of the eyebrows, a certain full development, which almost always goes with the feeling for words and with imagination."

"You didn't explain all that to me that day," she continued. "You just looked at me and said, 'Well, you look bright.' You know I had been used to having a little authority myself. And I felt silly. And then you asked me what I read. I told you H. G. Wells. It was just before *Joan and Peter* came out, and we were all crazy about Wells. Later on I thought that had been a foolish thing to say—everybody read Wells—I should have picked out some less known writer, more esoteric."

"No," I told her, "it was all right to say Wells. I wasn't looking for any Dadaist writer."

I had found in interviewing people that when I said, "What do you read?" the answer would often be, "Oh, I love the classics; I read Dickens and Scott." This meant that the job-seeker read nothing except the newspaper or the *Saturday Evening Post*.

A copywriter ought to like to read. He may have only the simplest story to tell, but it will be better told if he has some rich robe of culture, worn casually. Much conscious learning can be dangerous. When you have an over-educated new copywriter, untrained—and give him something

to advertise, he will first turn to books, especially to history. You ask him to write an advertisement about a piano and he will turn in a piece of copy reading something like this:

HANNIBAL PLAYED A LYRE

In the days of the ancient Romans and Carthaginians there was little indeed with which to make music. A few simple stringed instruments were all they had. How thrilled Hannibal would be if he were alive to-day to see the Hahnemann Piano!

Just turn the pages of any magazine that lies near you now and see how many advertisements there are which read thus. It is the feeblest kind of advertising copy. What in the name of goodness does Hannibal's opinion have to do with the Hahnemann piano? It is possible that you may be rather interested in Hannibal's opinion. It may even with the help of a large, beautiful illustration make you think of a piano, but it is just as likely to make you think of a Steinway as of a Hahnemann.

But there are worse—like this actual advertisement, which appeared extensively:

I THINK SHE CAME FROM A LAND OF FIRE

On a summer day undreamed of beside the fabled sea—a wonderful girl and a wonderful man and a Playboy, making

three but not a crowd—lilting airs from the cool sea floor—the scent of sea-blown blossoms from the land.

Just loiter and let the world go by. You will know the meaning of the sunset—you will talk the language of the stars. That is joy!

What do you imagine this particular collection of words was supposed to sell? A sea? Or a beach? Or the stars? None of these—this farrago of sounds was intended to make you dash out and demand a certain make of automobile.

I used to say to my copywriters when they were writing about books: Don't ever go to see the home of the author. Don't ever see the author himself. If it is a life of that author you are writing, a true life, a real one—by all means see all you can but for advertising purposes never see a writer.

If you are advertising any product, never see the factory in which it is made. Don't know too much about it. Don't watch the people at work. Just know all you can about the finished article and the man who is going to buy it, and the conditions of selling in the business. Because, you see, when you know the truth about anything, the real, inner truth—it is very hard to write the surface fluff which sells it.

I had one sensible customer in Philadelphia who, when I dutifully went to ask to see his mills,

refused to show them to me, although they had a reputation as model mills. He said: "That has nothing to do with the advertising. You know the product—that's all you are really interested in. You know you hate machinery, don't you?"

"Yes," I said, "I do. I don't really want to see the factory at all—it's just something I thought I ought to do."

I once made a dutiful visit to Hannibal, Missouri, to find the place where Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer had played. All I saw was a most ordinary little dry-goods box of a house. For a while this visit made it impossible for me to write any Mark Twain copy at all. Until that time I had seen Hannibal through Mark Twain's eyes; then I saw it through eyes affected by a long dirty trip in a day coach with spitting farmers, a dreadful hotel, and an attack of ptomaine poisoning.

Visiting the birthplaces of great authors or the homes of their characters—that is something for unimaginative minds to do, minds that have not built for themselves a painting, something not of boards and bricks, but built of the soul. To such a vision in the mind all reality must be flat and stodgy.

This difference between poetry and prose once nearly wrecked an advertising campaign. I had

to write about James Whitcomb Riley. We thought it would be a good idea for me to go to Indianapolis and see Riley's home and visit Little Orphant Annie. I saw the narrow snuffy-looking house in which Riley had lived alone—and where he drank alone—all the years. It was built in our best burlesque type of Victorian architecture. And he seemed buried under the weight of the flat rich ease of Indiana just as his few good poems are lost under the lush sweetness of his abundant product.

While I was there I went to call on Little Orphant Annie and found her in a wooden shack, almost hidden by patchwork quilts. Poor little, sweet little Orphant Annie! Here was a worn-out, trudging old woman, whose one glory was her part in that poem. It was just as well she had that, however, because it apparently never occurred to the admirers of Riley to give her a decent place to live in.

Of what value is it for a great writer, a poet, or a painter to show us a thing through his inspired eyes if we are then merely to go and look at it with ours? I wish I could exchange my own impression of Temple Bar in London for the one I used to have as a child from reading *Pendennis*.

Even when I had to go through factories I tried to see as little of them as I could, and to

gain as few impressions as possible. It was natural that I could not help learning some lines of business fairly well, but I shut off this real knowledge in a compartment when I was writing advertising.

CHAPTER XXIII

Selling Beauty

ONCE I invested some of my own money in a customer's enterprise. Only once. And I lost not only the money, but the account, and about twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of time besides. My investment gave me a block of common stock; so I put more enthusiasm into this job than into others. Let those who think business is ruled by brains disentangle this particular tale of muddle and cross purposes, if they will.

In Lowell, Massachusetts, there are several national advertisers who have achieved renown and fortune. The success of Ayer's Sarsaparilla and O'Sullivan's Rubber Heels fills their neighbors with dreams of easily made money. So it happened that one day a group of men from Lowell whom I knew slightly through a business connection came to my office and told me that they would like to start a national sale for a line of cosmetics.

"Sounds interesting," I said. "Where do you sell them now?"

"Nowhere," they replied.

"Oh, then I suppose you've just discovered

some good new face cream. Do you manufacture it yourself or do you buy it from a chemist?"

"No—no," they laughed, "we don't know a darn thing about this beauty stuff. But we've seen some figures of profit—and some of the nationally advertised ones certainly do rake in the coin. There's a big margin."

"But aren't any of you in this business? Haven't you any connection with it at all?"

"No. I'm a real-estate man," said the leader of the delegation, "and one of us is a banker and some are cotton spinners. We're tired of watching other advertisers roll around in money. So we thought we'd find something to advertise nationally. And we haven't got any cosmetic company up there at all. Seems to me we could buy some one out, maybe—some little concern."

"But the money?" I ventured.

"Oh, we've got some to invest in anything that looks promising."

That was all they knew. But they liked this idea and asked me to look into the "beauty situation," and to let them know how much money would be needed and the right way to go about starting such a business.

"I'd like to play with it," I told them, "but it will cost money to make such an investigation."

"Well, we'll give you common stock in the company in return for your expenditure."

That seemed to me a good gamble, but later, when the company was finally organized, they told me that it would make a better impression on the investors at home if I would put some "actual" money into the business besides. In return they would see to it that most of the common stock was divided between themselves and me. By this time the money-making possibilities looked so good to me that I agreed, and put in a little money.

When I examined the cosmetic business for them, I found that there are two ways of going about it. There are concerns which sell one or two cold creams or face powders at a low price, in enormous quantities, through drug and department stores. These are direct, commercial enterprises, advertising widely and selling at a moderate profit. The other way is much more subtle and indirect. The companies which employ the second method deal in large numbers of creams, powders, rouges, lotions—each for its own little purpose—and all very high priced. These companies operate in an atmosphere of elegance and illusion, which enables them to charge fantastic prices—to add from five hundred to a thousand per cent to their costs.

I learned that it would cost about three hundred thousand dollars to put on the market a low-priced set of cold creams, while the more luxurious array could be started on its road for about sixty thousand dollars. The New England men were delighted to find that the more elaborate and lovely affair cost so much less than the commonplace one. They had an absorbing, surprised interest in every detail of making and planning these products. They took a delight in the powders and creams and lotions. You see the idea of profit made it possible for them to talk about beauty by the hour, without any reproach to their stern manliness. They were children with a new toy.

The plan which I laid out for them hung on three hooks. We would sell about fifty different concoctions for making beauty; we would have a distinctive home in New York, so unusual that it would attract national attention; and we would engage a woman of social reputation to act as nominal head of the company.

The products were to the best we could make. The prices the highest we could get. No matter how good you make a cream or a lotion of this kind, you cannot spend much money on its manufacture. Cocoanut oil, witch hazel, benzoin, a little perfume, a little alcohol—that is the sort of ingredients which go into cosmetics. Their manu-

facture is very simple, and the formulas are known to everyone in the trade. Of the ingredients the perfume only is high-priced, and it is used in tiny portions. But following the example of other luxurious establishments, our sales prices were to be from five to ten times our cost. Thus the woman seeking loveliness pays for the sense of luxury, the advertising, the show.

With that money she is buying something besides the actual physical thing in the jar. She is buying a little confidence that it will make her beautiful—a little of that faith which will make her happier and so perhaps lovelier. It seems cheap to exploit women's desire to look lovely, yet we found real delight in persuading a woman to make herself or even to think herself more beautiful. If we could all—men and women—consider ourselves beautiful, how much easier and more serene life would be!

We planned our fifty different products. We made a charming little house and called it Primrose House, and we engaged Mrs. Gouverneur Morris to act as head of the business. Nearly all the money was easily raised in Lowell. I put in my little share, which was, after all, as much in actual cash as anyone else put in. We engaged Mrs. (Buhl), an experienced woman, to run the technical end of the business. Mrs. Morris was

to take care of decorating and furnishing the place and attracting expensive trade, and I was to handle the advertising and publicity.

There is little to this sort of business except the advertising and the free publicity. And in our case we depended heavily on the latter. There are plenty of other good creams and lotions on the market at much lower prices. So everything had to be selected, arranged, and planned for the purpose of getting as much free publicity as possible.

This cost me money. The more free publicity, the less paid advertising was needed; and my commission came from the paid advertising. To make up for the loss, agencies usually charge an extra fee for securing free publicity in newspapers and magazines. But I charged none in this case. Again I was looking for the profits from my common stock. And the whole business appealed to something else in me—the love of small loveliness, delight in a perfect little box, in a beautiful bottle—to the intoxication of a bit of vermilion or yellow or green. In Primrose House I used this love of beauty as do so many advertising people—in the building of nonsense and fluff. Everything we touched or handled in the establishment was lovely to look at, to smell, and to feel.

Once the money had been raised and Mrs. Mor-

ris and Mrs. Buhl had been engaged, we had to get the business quickly into money-making form. All in one swift rush of two months we had to find a home, furnish it, plan fifty different beauty products with bottles and jars and labels for each one, set lines going for publicity, plan and write booklets and advertising. All these activities had to go on at one time, since the advertising would appear in the magazines just about the time that Primrose House was ready to open its doors.

We were lucky enough to find an unusual house in the Fifties, just off Fifth Avenue. It was pleasant to superintend its decoration, for it had a high, vast studio with tall windows. It was good to see it bloom in vermilion and apple green, with tall lamps, soft cushions of purple and lavender and green and turquoise, with dark Italian tables and cabinets, and couches into which one sank in peace. Old colored glass bottles stood in the tall windows, catching and reflecting light. Outside, we painted Primrose House gayly in cream with green and vermilion. It was to look as little as possible like a place where you spent money.

The stockholders were delighted with the place —they visited it often and I am sure it has had an epoch-making effect on interior decoration in the town of Lowell.

We had jolly little rooms, brightly painted, in which facial massage was given. One of our original ideas was to have only trained nurses give these treatments. The massage was high-priced, but there was no profit in it, as the nurses' wages were high. But that was all right, since their chief business was not to give treatments, but to sell goods. A competent graduate nurse in her formal uniform could sell more than an ordinary operator.

The object of the elaborate house and the treatments and the nurses was to get us talked about and increase the reputation of our goods. And again to get free publicity in newspapers and magazines—which they did. High-priced beauty products often have a handsome central office and so sell their products all over the country on the prestige gained in New York. Sometimes they also have such places in London and Paris. As modern business goes, this is legitimate. There are, unfortunately, many men and women who will not buy anything unless it is high priced; who select their clothes by the label of the maker; who feel that they gain something by having on their dressing tables the same jars and bottles that stand on the tables of Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Astor, or some other newspaper society star.

It was artfully done. You saw first the bright exterior of a charming little house. You walked

up a private-looking stairway and at the top burst on you the beauty of an inviting room, full of new ideas in decoration which you carried off in your mind for your own use. You were greeted by a pleasant-voiced girl who seated you comfortably, offered you cigarettes and tea (at no charge), while she sent for the technical expert who ran the place.

This expert would lead you to the light and diagnose learnedly for you. Then she summoned a nurse—told her your needs (which the nurse knew perfectly well). You then departed with the stiffly starched, healthy and good-looking nurse to one of the little rooms.

The manner of the nurse and the reclining chair soothe you at once. At your right stands a little table filled with delicious jars and bottles, with bowls of hot water and other bowls of ice.

The nurse dips a little sack of almond meal, orris, and oatmeal into hot water, and passes it swiftly over your face. Over the bowl of ice she pours a lotion smelling of roses and violets. Into this icy odorous mixture, pungent with alcohol, she dips fresh white balls of cotton batting. And then in precise, swift, and calm succession creams and liquids, oils and medicinal salves—all icy cool —are applied to your face. The nurse does not talk, except to say at just the right moment, "This

cream I am now using is heavier; your skin needs food." Or, "This tonic is very stimulating to a tired skin." Then the light is turned off and the nurse disappears, while you relax into complete sleepy nothingness.

When she returns she makes you realize that this establishment is not merely a business, but an expression of an art—the esoteric art of making up the face. Far indeed is this from the elementary notions of powder for a shiny skin and rouge for a pale one. These expensive purveyors to beauty know a thousand other tricks. They know that a touch of rouge a little to the side below the eyes makes the cheek bones seem smaller and the eyes brighter. That a delicate bit of rose should be placed in the hollow of the chin, sometimes even in the middle of the forehead, sometimes in the lobes of the ears; and that there are women who dab it on their knees and even on their toes.

Perhaps you have wondered what happened to the old-fashioned Gibson girl. The disappearance of the ancient stiff pompadour was not enough in itself to have made her cool face vanish so utterly from life. No, she has been killed by a new way of making up the face. Round eyes gave place in fashion to long almond shaped ones; women began to elongate their eyes and brows with

kohl or lead pencil. The rouge was placed higher on the face—and lo, the Gibson girl was gone!

So the nurse brought out her magic tricks—a row of pots and pencils and boxes. And you arose from her chair a work of art, refreshed by your rest and flattered by your reflection in the mirror. In that mood you were ready to buy many packages set out for your tempting.

We had fifty such creams and liquids. There was a cream to clean the face; a cream to build up sagging muscles; one to close large pores; one for the neck that was too stout. There was a gentle lotion and an astringent lotion. There were talcum powders and bath salts and bath talcum and bath soaps. It was a cardinal sin in our decalogue to use soap on the face. I don't know whether we really believed this or not, or whether the other beauty establishments believe it. Most of them say the same thing. I have consulted specialists—physicians—yet to this day I do not really know whether it is a cardinal sin against beauty to use soap on the face or not—sometimes it is fashionable to apply fine creams; sometimes it is considered smart to use coarse laundry soap. There were unguents and oils for the body. No wife of Solomon was oiled and perfumed and massaged and cleaned as was the woman who bought these fifty varieties.

But every woman will understand how much I liked to plan these cosmetics and their little packages. It was fun to examine little jars of cream sent by the chemist—some white as milk, some rosy, and some yellow as sweet butter, some perfumed with mimosa, others with clover and others with elusive undiscoverable scents. Some were heavy as narcissus, and some delicate as yellow tulips in May. There were gold liquids for the face and green ones for the hands. It was easy to forget the sophistry and be seduced by smell and touch into believing in what one was selling.

Each of the fifty had to have its own name. We called on the dawn and the dew, the flowers and the sky. The theory of beauty which we sold was not any reincarnation from the past, but a modern, natural May-dew, outdoor type of loveliness, which you could put on comfortably in your dressing room. We assumed always that you had a dressing room.

Under it all we had a basic advertising idea. As we explained to the nurses, "Remember that what we are selling is not beauty—it is youth. The women who will come here are not many of them under thirty; most are over forty. They want to be young. You are selling freshness and youth. In thinking of these products and talking about

them, try to think of a May morning in England, the kind of complexion an English girl is supposed to have—even if she rarely does have it after twenty.

"In this establishment we are going to sell every artificial thing there is to help beauty, but we are going to use it so that it will seem natural and not artificial. And above all things it is going to be young—young—young! We make women feel young."

"But in France," objected one of my friends, "they don't try to make the face look natural; they try to make it look artificial."

"Yes," I admitted, "but in France and continental Europe the idea of a fascinating woman is different from ours here. In Europe it is not so disgraceful to be forty. There experience, individuality, character, showing in the face, are considered seductive; here we put a higher value on youth and sweetness. In the United States men look on sophistication with fear. And so the abler woman often hides her forehead and tries to look young and inexperienced."

The designing of our packages taught us something surprising—that these high-priced contents must not be sold in elaborate packages. The public which bought from us distrusts a handsome package, because it feels that money has

been put into the wrapping instead of into its contents. Therefore our packages were of the utmost simplicity. The plainest of drug-store jars and bottles were used. This arrangement is very convenient for the makers and sellers, as it greatly increases the profits. We tied the packages up gayly with yellow ribbons and a black-and-vermilion label, on which were little dancing figures. The effect was delicate and vivacious.

Naturally, in all this planning and choosing the men in Lowell had little to do except look on. It was a subject as far from them as tea-growing in Darjeeling—more so, because some of them did drink tea and none of them used cosmetics.

Our idea in having Mrs. Morris was of course snobbish. And it was meant to attract newspaper attention. This part of our plan astonished us by its immediate and rich fruitfulness. All over the United States newspapers and magazines bloomed with the story, "Society Woman Goes Into Business." We received about three hundred thousand dollars' worth of free space. What we gave the newspapers was always legitimate news or woman's page material—copy the editors liked. Mrs. Morris's charm and vivacity appealed to the newspaper men and women who interviewed her.

But why should a woman want to use our creams because Mrs. Morris was connected with

the establishment? Snobbishness—a pitiful confession of poverty in self-confidence. "In heaven and hell there are no snobs. There every despised demon hugs his favorite vice forever and even the smallest of the stars shines with a singular glory."

And we were not so absurd as some of our competitors. There is one little place in New York run by a Frenchwoman, whose prices are very high. Her creams are delicious. They look like something good to eat. They smell of strawberries.

She says to the woman who was having her face massaged, "I alone give treatments here —only I myself. I cannot teach what I know. I cannot pass to anyone else the magic of my fingers. And I myself with my own hands mix each of these creams. Everything in them must be fresh when it is used, and used as soon as possible after it is picked. Think, madame: Each year I go to France, and there I buy strawberries—the American strawberry is not good enough to be put into a cream like this. On the boat on the way back, when the strawberries are at their freshest and richest and the full flavor is in them, there I mix my creams, just not to lose one moment. Now, madame, you smell it and you will see that these are fresh strawberries—and you will see

when you use it that it is fresh cream only that I put into these jars."

This was engaging babble. Fresh cream and fresh strawberries would both have turned rancid in a week compounded in this way.

All of our publicity material, circulars, and advertising in the magazines, had to live in an atmosphere of charm, snobbishness and restraint. No superlatives were used. Language was toned down. All was done in *Vogue*-ish fashion. The use of French phrases was avoided as vulgar and all was kept as close as possible to the American idea of a high-class English society atmosphere. The preparation and production of this atmosphere was entertaining.

The business started with a rush. Everything about it was immediately successful. Free publicity poured in. Customers came, people of social position eagerly helped Mrs. Morris. The products were beautiful, the treatments were pleasant, and the goods sold from the beginning, not only in New York, but in larger cities all over the country—usually in the best department store in the larger cities. The first dividend was paid to the stockholders.

To my dismay, I found that Primrose House had steadily eaten into my time until it was robbing me of most of my other activities. I could

not look for any new accounts and was not doing good work on those I had. There seemed no way out of it. I had discovered Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Buhl. I had to make the decisions on the decorations and finally put them through, choosing many of the chairs and hangings myself. I had to pass on each individual product, had to design the labels and packages and name the products. I had to stage the publicity and take charge of the advertising. I don't mean that I did all these things myself. My copywriters did much of the work and Mrs. Morris and Mrs. Buhl did much, but the responsibility came to be mine. I had more authority than I should have had, but here, as in other places, people sat about and waited for some definite-minded person to tell them what to do. I am what some people call a good executive; what others call *bossy*. Some one had to run things, and it happened to be me. The directors did not like this situation. They became more and more restless at the amount of authority in my hands.

In the beginning it had seemed to me strange that this group of men should suddenly desire to go into the business of selling beauty. And it seemed stranger as time went on. But little things happened which explained, perhaps, why they put

their money into so unrelated and foreign a business.

There are many men whose whole lives have been spent in the making of money, with never a doubt in their minds of the value of that ideal. They had been loyal husbands and fathers; no beauty or art or creative impulse had touched them. Now this sort of life is not natural. Such men have no vices except that of eating too much. They love to talk about food. And people who eat too much are often trying to satisfy with food other cravings which they do not understand.

Such men are likely to be drawn toward a business dealing in lovely things to satisfy some hunger within them for love, for adventure, for beauty. They do not know this—but they have that hunger. To love a woman not one's wife is a sin; to admire beautiful fabrics is weak and womanish; to love a cat instead of a dog is queer. But if a man has the excuse of making money out of anything, it is different. If he has that excuse he may even play with the most lovely things in the world. He looks at the Follies Chorus with a sense of sin; but he admires the men who make money out of the Follies show. To buy a bottle of perfume is a sign of effeminacy, but to sell the bottle of perfume at a profit is justified in his world.

Does this sound far fetched? I wonder if you

would think so if you could see (as I have) a group of hard, calculating business men in delighted admiration of a doll—not a living doll, but a wax doll, a little puppet dressed in Paris—with an impudent little face; something which I used perhaps in advertising or window display. I have seen a man of narrow interests come to life with pleasure when our work brought us in touch with a pretty actress, even though he himself did not even meet that actress. There was just something in the thought, some feeling of contact with a world of beauty and mystery.

This was not true of all the stockholders. Many of them were in the thing just out of good nature or because they wanted some favor from the men who had organized the company. None of them had invested much money and yet several of them gave this business an enormous amount of time. And the more attention I gave it the less they liked it. In spite of all the unprofitable work I was doing, they resented the trifling commission I made on the advertising. It did not pay for one-tenth of my work. One day they told me that, once the business got on its feet, they intended to "get rid of Mrs. Morris."

I protested. "Why, that won't do at all! Mrs. Morris is building this thing up and she's counting on this job."

"Well, we're paying her a lot of money and we can't afford it."

"But," I said, "it will be very bad for the business. People will mistrust the company if Mrs. Morris leaves it. They will be bewildered by such a change. They now think she owns it. And if they are once bewildered by anything, you'll lose their trade."

"Oh," they answered, "we'll get all the value out of her name at the beginning. Got to look at expenses, you know. Got to keep them down." And they went on, "We won't need Mrs. Buhl either after a while. We'll learn the business from her and then let her go. Plenty of cheaper people to be got."

As long as I was with Primrose House I succeeded in keeping both women in their jobs. But here began my real dissension with the Lowell people. There was about them an air of suspicion. If a man proposes to you an action of which he is a little ashamed and you refuse to take part in it, he will never forgive you. Later in the rush of work this was covered up a little. But I soon found that they were beginning to resent my advertising knowledge. They had no advertising experience at all, and yet they fought me in directors' meetings and overruled me in matters on which I had worked for twenty years

and of which they could not possibly know anything. And each time they overruled me they hated me more. They examined my advertising bills with a microscope, and it was perfectly plain that they suspected me of some kind of mysterious double-dealing.

They did not understand, I am sure, why I should take such a tremendous interest in the affairs of the concern when my investment in it was not large, and the advertising account—with its resultant commission—was small. I liked to work with this enterprise because its products were beautiful; and I felt—in some way—the sense of creations, as the original idea and its development, were my own.

Most of our disagreements arose because they wanted to take away from the business the subtle atmosphere which we had so painfully and carefully developed and without which our products would be worth no more than any other creams on the market. So friction grew until the situation became intolerable. Finally they took the advertising away from me while I was in Europe and unable to do anything about it. They gave the account to a little agency, which, whatever its other qualifications, had not even a woman copywriter and had no experience in selling any kind of beauty products. From that time on the

advertising became merely a vulgar paraphrasing of what had been done before. A year later they discharged Mrs. Morris abruptly and rudely, and a few months afterward they also in equally rude fashion discharged Mrs. Buhl.

The business paid one dividend while I had the account. It has never paid another.

The money loss to me was small enough. The amount I invested was trifling and in a way I was relieved to see the account go, because it was taking too much of my time to be profitable. But never in all my business experience have I seen so much bitterness. Some of the directors grew to hate me as I have never been hated in all the years of my life. The rupture had been inevitable from the beginning. It was simply a basic difference in temperament and outlook. The causes lay deep in one of the fundamental laws of life; that unsympathetic personalities cannot get along together. For long contacts, whether of employer and employees, customer and agent, lawyer and client, husband and wife, it isn't ability that counts; it isn't character; it isn't hard work; it isn't loyalty; it isn't kindness; it isn't subtlety; it isn't anything except a basic harmony of mind and disposition. When two people try to get along without such harmony and have to put in its place shrewdness or kindness, the result is bound to be dis-

astrous to either mind or character. Now these men and I had no contact in the world in common.

It was unbearable to them that a woman should know more about anything, even her own business, than they did—they, masters of mankind. And I showed the strain of dealing with them; I sometimes lost my temper.

I remember the annoyance of some of the Primrose House directors when one day they were driving us around near Lowell and I remarked that the long rows of cotton mills along the Merrimac River looked like jails.

And I remember a disastrous conversation with a man of similar type.

He had come to my house one evening to discuss some advertising plans. After we had talked about his business and how much money there was in it, and what we would do next week, and what we would do to-morrow, and how we would cut down expenses, and then had said that all over again about four times; and then had talked about the lobster at Swampscott and the motor regulations on the road to Lynn, and repeated and repeated all this over and over again—the conversation lay down and died. Each subject of talk that I brought up failed—fell with a thud. I was very tired; in my weariness I grasped at a

stray wisp of conversation and used it with neither sense nor tact.

"That's a pretty picture you've got on the wall here," he said.

I remembered that he was of Irish descent.

"Yes," I replied, eagerly. "You know it was done by an Irishman, a man of great talent."

"Oh!" The Irishman before me looked blank.

I went on stupidly, "Isn't it fine what the Irish are doing?"

"Is that so?"

"Oh yes—Lady Gregory and Yeats . . . you know," I went on, fatuously.

"No, I never heard of them."

"Oh yes! And Synge and George Moore —"

"Oh!" he said flatly and looked furious. Suddenly the cause flashed on me. He was not that kind of Irishman. He had grown up in Massachusetts, where they looked down on the Irish. It was his bitter shame that his parents had been Irish. And he thought I was making fun of him. It had never occurred to him in all his life that anything Irish could be a source of pride. That was the gift the public opinion of New England had handed to him.

Out of little things like this, which, after all, were only indications of a deeper disagreement, the rupture naturally grew. And so that relation

broke up, leaving me with some worthless stock, a lot of lost time, and the thought that the most disastrous experience among clients that I had ever had was the one in which I had done the hardest work and in which I had had the closest financial interest.

You see, if I had been less interested in this business I should have handled their idiosyncrasies and ignorances more cleverly; but I genuinely wanted above everything else to make the business pay—which was apparently the wrong attitude altogether. Do not speak to me, you captains of finance, about faithful and loyal service—it is nonsense of the first water.

CHAPTER XXIV

Setting a New Fashion

IT IS a relief to turn from this story of confusion to another which from beginning to end was harmonious. This story came from Massachusetts, too, from the Boston Manufacturing Company, makers of Gilbrae ginghams and other cottons in Waltham. I knew the treasurer of these mills slightly. It occurred to me that I could build up an account there, and one day I asked him, "Why are all ginghams always the same tiresome little red and white or blue and white checks? Isn't it possible to make something more beautiful and original?"

"Rather!" he replied. "It certainly is mechanically possible; and we have a designer whose business it is to plan new patterns. But so far we've found them hard to sell. Buyers in the big stores say that women want the same little old checks year after year."

"I don't believe that," I said. "I don't believe that at all. I think it's the buyer who hates to change. That makes him think it's the customer. I'm sure that if women could see the ginghams

in new good designs they would like them better than the old ones."

"Nothing would please me more." Mr. Sweetser was encouraging. "I should like to introduce new designs for very good reasons. If we could manage that, we might get rid of many of our labor troubles, cut down dull seasons, and make more money all around. And"—I was surprised at the reverberations brought forth by my small question—"don't you think that if we had new designs we might also make a finer gingham and get a higher price?"

"Yes, you could. American women look for pattern first, not quality. There are almost none who can judge the quality of a material."

"Our experience shows that is so, too," he agreed. "It wouldn't do just to make a better gingham—we'd never get the money for it."

"You're perfectly right," I continued. "You'd have to make the better gingham with new designs, and if a woman got interested in the pattern, then she'd perhaps discover by experience that the quality was better."

The positive tone of my remarks did not come out of the air; I had a close friend who was then on the editorial staff of *Vogue* who had been telling me much about the planning of fabrics and clothes, and by this time I had acquired such

experience in selling various things to the public that I often could tell with something like certainty how that public would act. Part of this was intuition; part of it was experience piled up little by little. Such intuition and experience combined give us in the advertising business a feeling about the public that can be easily understood by editors and politicians.

Mr. Sweetser and I were pleased with each other's point of view.

He went on, "If we can sell our ginghams steadily at a uniform price, we'll be able to keep our labor employed continuously. That way we'll get rid of labor troubles that are bound up in short time running and that sort of irregularity."

"And there's another aspect to it,"—I was growing enthusiastic. "You know women want something different all the time."

"They certainly seem to," he laughed.

"Now you give them each year the same old checks—naturally year after year passes and women will not buy ginghams except for aprons because they've already got all the checks they want. If you had new designs each year, really new and interesting and in tune with the fashions, I think you wouldn't have so many bad years. You could make gingham a staple fashion; because it really is the most comfortable material to

wear in the summer. It doesn't crumple like linen and it is cooler than silk."

"That sounds reasonable," he said. "But you said something just now that I don't understand exactly. You said 'in tune with the fashions.'"

"Yes. Your designers can make the most beautiful ginghams that ever were, and if they don't make up attractively, in the straight or bouffant lines that are in fashion that year, they're of no use."

"Of course," he said. "Of course. I don't think we've given enough consideration to that, although we have tried to be careful about colors —to keep them the right ones for the year's styles. I don't think we've done it, though, as a matter of fact.

"It all sounds good to me," he went on. "But I don't see any way of making the better gingham and selling it in this country without some extra help. Women have a habit of paying twenty-five cents a yard for American ginghams and from sixty-five cents to a dollar and a quarter for Scotch ginghams. Now to get them into the habit of paying fifty-five and sixty-five for American ginghams, you can be sure is no easy matter."

"Let me think about it a while," I asked. "I have an idea, but it's a little vague."

He was interested at once. "Why don't you work it out and let me know?"

"Love to," I answered. "Of course it's just a plan I'd show you. I don't want to prepare any advertising or show any sketches on speculation."

He agreed.

"Anyway," I remarked, "you will see that the advertising will prove to be a small part of this plan."

I then sat down with this problem. To get American women interested in new designs in gingham; to persuade them to pay more than they were used to paying for it; to get department-store buyers to buy the gingham for their women customers; to design new and striking patterns; to make gingham a permanent rather than a temporary and changeable fashion.

But this is in the wrong order. With the American buyer you have to put over a fashion first; once that is done price doesn't matter. First would come the designs, because it takes a year to plan and make these before they can be delivered to the trade; then new and permanent gingham fashions; then the department store buyer, then the woman who wears the clothes, and last the price.

First, knowing my own limitations on matters of fashion, I made an arrangement with Lotta

Alger, then one of the editors of *Vogue*, who supplied all the technical ideas and knowledge. Then I tried my own hand at designing. This was a new toy and I got some ideas which might never have come if I had spent my life doing that kind of work. One day, playing with a piece of gingham, I pulled out of it a few threads lengthwise and crosswise, making squares that looked like hemstitching. I was surprised at the result! The bit of fabric in my hand looked as light and delicate as voile, but was as strong as gingham. Here was a new design, if it could be made on gingham machinery—and we found that it could. On pieces of gingham without any pattern Mrs. Alger drew thin black lines up and down and across. These two basic changes in pattern we turned over to the designers of Gilbrae ginghams. They had meantime also been working on new patterns and new combinations of color, which were charming. Where the old-plan ginghams had been always one color, now they made the warp, for instance, blue, and the woof yellow, so getting a soft green. Even the little checks were transformed by changes in sizes and color and arrangement.

It took months to make these new ginghams, as the machines had to be rigged up for each pat-

tern, and only about a hundred yards were made of each so that we could try them out.

We had decided at the very beginning that we could not put this plan through without the help of Paris. We can talk of American-inspired fashions as much as we like. I have heard it charged that Patou, the French dressmaker, comes to the United States to get ideas and then goes back to Paris to make them up and adapt them to the American trade. What he really does is probably not that: he sees what Americans have done to modify the original French ideas, and what they like; then he goes back to Paris and gets up his new designs to fit in with that knowledge—that is, he works to please American taste. Many of the big French dressmakers do this much more reluctantly.

No fashion can be introduced successfully in the United States by the *haute couture* of Paris unless American women want it. Each year out of the workrooms of the famous French dressmakers come hundreds of new models, even thousands. The American buyers for the big department stores and specialty shops look these over and pick out what they think their customers will like. From these the customers make a further selection. These buyers so completely represent the American woman and her taste that she usually

likes what they bring over. But not always. Any large shop at the end of the season sells off original French models that have been failures. So that while the Paris dressmaker does the original thinking, the American woman does the deciding. And the pressure of her deciding is beginning to change French work.

But more powerful than the reality is the American woman's idea of French fashions. She likes to think that her clothes are planned in Paris. For years there have been patriotic drives in the United States for American-inspired clothes. They have been failures, not because we cannot design clothes, but because American women do not want us to. The American woman is convinced that the Frenchwoman knows more than she does about charm and allurement. Whether she does or not, certainly the French *grand couturier* is already highly trained in the making of lovely things. So why not let him go on? What exactly is the good of trying to do it at home? We have enough other things to do. Why not take advantage of this precise French talent? Anyway, whether our paper pattern makers and manufacturers like it or not, we are still taking our fashion inspiration from France.

So we knew that in order to put over our ginghams we had to take full advantage of this French

idea as it was understood in the United States. The Boston Manufacturing Company had rushed through a small quantity of the new designs in the new quality. I had to go to Paris, anyway. When I got there I was told at once that my idea sounded beautiful but was impractical. It couldn't be done.

"Why not?" I asked the great fashion expert to whom I was talking.

"My dear lady"—his English was precise and his gold-link bracelet contrasted oddly with his powerful figure—"don't you know that all the *grands couturiers* have an agreement among themselves not to push American-made fabrics? More than that, they refuse even to use them?"

"Why?"

"Because of the great French fabric-makers like Rodier and Bianchini. These people make only a small quantity, you know, of each fabric, and make it by hand; and they are always putting out new and beautiful designs."

"But," I objected, "our mills are making better quality silks than are made over here." I learned later that many of the famous French dressmakers are financed by the great French weavers and jobbers, who thus control the dressmakers. But they do create fabrics with a lavish gift of beauty.

"That is so," he agreed "but the designs are still not so beautiful or so original. You see a great dressmaker has to get inspiration from new fabrics. You will agree with me that there has been no really new idea in line in fashions for many years; that we all keep turning back to history for the lines of women's clothes . . ."

"Yes, that's so, but there have been many new materials and new patterns and colors."

"Exactly"—the arbiter of style was gracious —"and it is this novelty to which the great dressmaker turns for inspiration. Without it they feel helpless. They depend on Rodier and Bianchini. And so you see, my dear madam, if they made up the American gingham they would antagonize the French maker of new fabrics. It is quite impossible, what you want to do.

"Will you pardon me a moment"—he turned to the telephone and spoke to a maid at his home. "Marie, will you have some one start at once with my gray outfit for the races. It is now twelve o'clock and I must be there at twenty minutes to two, as you know. I shall have to eat luncheon in the interval, so you must hurry. See that the tie also is gray . . . Yes—you know what shoes. That's right. Thank you."

As he hung up the telephone he explained to me why the French rarely wear cotton dresses.

Summer in France is not warm enough except on the Côte d'Azur, and no fashionable people go there in summer. Everywhere else silks and even woollens are worn the year round. Cotton dresses are made mostly for American trade, because these lend themselves to embroidery and handwork. Although gingham as a fabric was invented at Guingamp, it is almost never worn except as aprons in the kitchen.

What to do? I had no connections with big dressmakers and knew little about clothes in a technical sense. So I did what I always do in such a situation—went to some one who did know all about it, to an able American woman, who knew all the dressmakers and for whom they were eager to do favors. She understood every technical detail of making and selling clothes. Without any friction or any trouble on my part, she had sets of dresses made for me within two weeks after I had been told on every hand that the whole thing was completely impossible. The dresses were beautiful, they cost little, they were made by four of the most famous French dressmakers. Very good names to use in the United States.

We put these dresses on manikins and photographed them in the Bois de Boulogne, and on the Champs Elysées, being careful to include the Arc de Triomphe or some fashionable restaurant

in the picture for atmosphere. We had hats and parasols made to match. And dolls—impudent, smart French dolls dressed in pert little gingham dresses, with gingham hats and sunshades.

All these were shipped to the United States. So far the plan was working beautifully.

But I had had another idea about which I was in much doubt—to photograph our gingham dresses on French noblewomen. It was important that they should belong to distinguished families, that they should be rich and of good social position. Rich women of title who have no position in French society are common enough. These would not do for our purpose. The plan might have seemed a flighty one if I had not already secured so many indorsements from well-known people at home for one product or another. They are easy to get. But never before had we had to use the actual photograph of any woman of social prominence, and I had been told that the Frenchwoman of good position wouldn't dream of allowing her name, much less her photograph, to be used for publicity.

When you see pages advertising creams or what not, each one praised by some actress or social leader, you think perhaps that these commendations are paid for. Sometimes they are, but often they are not, at least not directly. We had a

dozen ways of getting them. Sometimes they were given for the sake of publicity, even by some social star. Sometimes an actress or social leader has a poor friend who acts as a sort of intermediary between herself and the advertiser, in which case she permits her name to be used simply through kindness and good nature. To help such a friend to earn a hundred dollars she is willing to say the most generous things about products of which she knows nothing.

We never paid more than a hundred and fifty dollars for a name. There are advertisers who pay from five to ten thousand dollars apiece for such names. But the method is different. The advertiser in that case works with a society collecting funds for some public movement. To this society they say: "We've got a good product. Your members would like it if they used it, and we'd like their indorsement. We'll contribute five thousand dollars to your funds for each well-known name among your members that you will allow us to use in publicity."

The secretary of the association, who has had a hard time raising funds, takes this proposition to its members, and the job is done.

I put my plan up to some representatives of American magazines in Paris. They were discouraging. I had told them that I not only wanted the

photographs of these society women for the ginghams, but also their indorsement without photographs for a perfume I was advertising.

"We'd like to help you very much, but it is a hopeless thing you ask. Frenchwomen of standing will hardly allow their photographs to be used in society news, much less in advertising!"

But by exactly the same methods used in the United States we had within three days commendations from women of the highest social rank, all of them wealthy, both for the perfume account and for the dresses. And we photographed them in their homes wearing our gingham gowns. They made only one stipulation, that the advertising should appear only in the United States and Canada, not in Europe. And we had at our disposal, though we did not use them, the names of several women of high rank in England.

So then we had our material: a number of dresses from famous French houses; some equally charming dresses from French wholesalers; we had our dolls, our parasols, our hats; photographs of the titled women in their own homes; photographs of manikins in the Bois.

Meantime the mills in Massachusetts were making up the new patterns of ginghams in quantity.

We were ready to fire our guns, and then we found that we did not know exactly at whom to fire. Ginghams had always been sold to big jobbing houses, who in turn sold to retailers. It is well known in the advertising and selling world that it is harder to put through a new idea with a jobber than it is with retail shops. This is easy to understand: the jobber gets his profit from enormous quantity—he does not depend so much on salesmen, and he therefore falls back on staples. We knew that it was going to be hard to put over our new patterns with the jobbers and it did not look promising even with the retail-store buyers. Although we had kept our plans and work more or less secret, we had shown some of our new designs to a few of the largest shops in New York.

The buyers of dress goods said, "Yes, they're pretty, but we can't sell them. Ginghams should be a staple."

"That's why you never sell ginghams except for children's dresses and aprons."

"That's all right. We've got a good sale in them. Don't like to disturb a good thing."

"But," we argued, "you do sell new patterns in Scotch ginghams."

"That's different. The public is used to that

idea. Your patterns are a lot more unusual than the Scotch ones. You've got this new drawnwork thing, too—it's practically a new material. You can't put over a brand-new thing so suddenly. Got to change fashions and patterns gradually. It's no use showing women this stuff. They don't know how it'll look made up. They'll be afraid to try it."

In this they bore out our own opinion. It will not do to show a new fabric suddenly to the public. No matter how much it is admired as a work of art, it will not be bought unless women can see how it will look as a dress. But all the material we had brought from France served this purpose.

I found the dress departments in the stores more open-minded. I showed these new things myself to Franklin Simon & Co., who welcomed them before they saw any of the French work.

Though we had to sell to the jobbers and the retail stores, we could not rely on either to resell to the consumer without our help. They had too many other things to handle. So it was part of our plan to make the consumer go to the nearest shop to buy Gilbrae ginghams, after we had persuaded that shop to buy from the jobber or from us. We were not yet ready to do this, although we had been working for nine months on Gilbrae.

Instead, our next step was to arrange an exhibition for the jobbers who were then about to come to New York for their annual buying of cotton goods. We made a display in the selling offices of the mills in New York—of our dolls, our dresses, our photographs. And when the jobbers came in to buy we would say: "We have picked out a few of the leading jobbers in the country—about a dozen of you can have this display. You may be one of them if you want to." With everything so clearly before them they were only too eager. So we shipped the display in specially made trunks from one jobber to another.

When this was over it was time for department stores to begin to sell gingham to customers. We divided our display into several windows, with little drawings in color showing how these windows should look, and with engraved cards containing advertising material. These we loaned to the best store in each of the larger cities for a week. Since the season for ginghams varies in different parts of the country, this was feasible. The displays traveled all over the country.

When the woman had been attracted by the window to go to the dress goods department and see the ginghams close at hand, she found there colored folders with photographs of the dresses and samples of the materials attached, which she

could show to her dressmaker; or she found copies of the gowns themselves in the dress section of the store. At the same time we had a little advertising in women's magazines, in which we used our material from Paris.

The newspapers were glad to print the photographs of the titled French ladies and even of the manikins, because it was really fashion news. The dresses we showed were new. It is easy to get publicity from the newspapers if you have something with news value to their readers. The photographs were also shown in moving-picture news reels and in the magazines.

In New York Franklin Simon & Co., Arnold Constable & Co., Abraham & Straus; in Boston, Jordan Marsh Co.; in Chicago, Carson, Pirie, Scott & Co.; and so all over the country—always the better-class shops—used the window displays and distributed the folders showing how to make up our ginghams.

The first thing that happened was that we sold our goods. The second was that the commission house which handled the selling end for the mills, sold more of every other gingham which they carried. The commission house, seeing the effect of new designs in the Gilbrae line made all their other gingham mills likewise put out new designs.

That is the way such things usually work. And if you have what is called a "leader" to give your salesmen—something that goes well and stands out from your other goods—it pushes everything else along.

With the Gilbrae ginghams we set a new fashion in women's clothes. The restless desire for a change in fashions is a healthy outlet. It is normal to want something different, something new, even if many women spend too much time and too much money that way. Change is the most beneficent medicine in the world to most people. And to those who cannot change their whole lives or occupations even a new line in a dress is often a relief. The woman who is tired of her husband or her home or a job feels some lifting of the weight of life from seeing a straight line change into a bouffant, or gray pass into beige. Most people have not the courage or the understanding to make deeper changes.

Yet to-day this plan has become worthless. It was copied as quickly as possible by other manufacturers. As a consequence there were competitive demands for dealers' windows and for jobbers' displays. Each manufacturer planned a more expensive show than his competitors; each was willing to pay heavily for parts of the plan

which had cost us nothing. So the whole thing became impracticable. And it became necessary to think up a new idea for the client. In the advertising business it is necessary always—always—to think of a new plan.

CHAPTER XXV

New Ideas for Old

THE advertising business was just a bright little boy twenty years ago. Now it is a giant. It has fitted in so perfectly with the needs of the time that there has been no question of making it grow, of feeding it; it leaped along, able to subsist on the coarsest food and the most poisonous diets, flourishing on failures, growing fat on disasters. Business depressions sometimes send advertising up instead of down. In bad times it takes more effort to sell goods than in good times and established business houses have reserve funds for an extra drive, which takes the form of advertising.

During the war the advertising business was like the gold rush to Nevada. Everybody had money, everybody was buying things right and left. Almost any advertising, no matter how bad, sold goods. The strangest articles were advertised. I remember one double-page spread costing fifteen thousand dollars in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which offered to the public bottles—just bottles. Not any special kind of bottles,

merely the bottles made by one manufacturer and which were used by druggists and other people who bottled goods—the kind of unnoticed container you buy every day with something in it and then throw away. There it was in the *Saturday Evening Post*, fifteen thousand dollars' worth, with a picture, I believe, of the manufacturer! One of the reasons why advertising was so prolific during the war was that money spent this way might build up a business and at the same time be saved from that snapping turtle—the income tax.

The heads of most advertising agencies before 1905 were not business men as they are to-day; they were literary men, whose pens turned out advertising instead of essays. Since the business was new and the trails had to be blazed, they were also gamblers, men who liked the new and extraordinary, the dramatic.

Nobody knew twenty years ago what it cost to write an advertisement, to handle an account. To-day this is all accurately figured out. Advertising has the solid mentality usual in a large, established business with heavy investments. It no longer attracts the lovers of chance, but rather those who look for safety. It has a pontifical dignity which robs it of much of its earlier fire. It never occurred to any of the pioneers to think

about the dignity of advertising. It was much too interesting for that.

Men who were its brilliant stars in those days could not live in a modern advertising agency. There was the man who invented the coupon, for instance. Probably you never realized that the coupon had to be invented, but it did. Ralph Tilton was the man who first thought of it. You see so many advertisements of books sold by mail to-day that they seem commonplace, but in his time it was all a new idea and the people who were doing it had the dramatic energy of creators.

I remember seeing Ralph Tilton just once in the office of the Century Company. I had heard so many stories about his adventures that I was surprised to see how languid his tall figure looked. He was not handsome, but he had the heavy-lidded melancholy eyes which many women find irresistible. I looked at him with curiosity, because everybody in our world knew that he was the son of that Mrs. Tilton who had been involved in the famous Henry Ward Beecher-Tilton case in '70's.

Ralph Tilton was later made advertising manager for one of the big women's magazines. He wrote advertising copy in the style of true genius—at four o'clock in the morning, with coffee at his side and a wet handkerchief about his head. With

his charm and persuasive tongue he was an inspired salesman, but his sales proved too costly for his employers. Once he was trying to get the account of some advertiser in Chicago. For this purpose he chartered a special train and took a vast company of genial people and customers to Chicago in it. It was spectacular and got the business, but it cost more than the total amount of that business. The story ran in advertising circles that he had a special chef on the train and that he gave his guests cigarettes monogrammed with the intertwined initials of the train and his magazine—that he also bore along several chorus girls for their entertainment. I do not know how much of this story was true, but it shows the kind of reputation he had.

The magazine publishers had a five-year contract at twenty thousand dollars a year with Tilton, which they determined to break. The way they are said to have done it is enlightening. One day the manager called Mr. Tilton in and said: "Ralph, I think you ought to have more money. It's a wonderful record you've made this last year."

Mr. Tilton, unable to figure the difference between cost and income, naïvely believed this. "Well," he said, "you can't make me mad that way."

"All right. Beginning next week you'll get twenty-five thousand a year instead of twenty."

And the next week, surely enough, his salary check called for about a hundred dollars more. By accepting this increase in salary Mr. Tilton broke the contract and was promptly fired. This trick has been used most successfully both before and since.

But why tell more about this stray soul? Theodore Dreiser has told his story far better in *The Genius*, where Tilton appears as the chief character under the name of Eugene Witla.

In the early 1900's it needed daring people to plan advertising campaigns. There had been few, and in each job you had to step out into the air. You were not sure what kind of copy would sell goods, what kind of illustrations, or how much space or what periodicals. But if now you have a soap to advertise you know that there are certain definite things to do. In the very beginning you send to an organization in New York which specializes in that sort of service and say, "Please send me at once exact information about the periodicals used, the money spent, and the size of advertisements of all the principal soap manufacturers during the last five years." Then you go to another place where there are files of all advertising up to date and see what kind of copy has been used by all

the soap manufacturers. It is easy enough to find out which of these campaigns were successful and which were failures. So you have something solid to go on. You have to use judgment, of course, but on the whole the affair is much more standardized.

I believe that on the whole there is a highly creative and imaginative type of mind in the advertising business. But most of the original work now is on new plans for selling goods. These are as often devised by advertising agencies as by the manufacturer.

Years ago there was much wild and daring playing with what we called "lay out." Strange effects in type and lines were secured. Most advertisers wouldn't spend more than about ten dollars for an advertising drawing, so the copywriter and artist would take hours to plan unusual arrangements of lines and type. Many of these were grotesque, many seem related to the most modern movement in art, so extraordinary were their angles and circles.

Ideas are not nearly so important in advertising as they used to be. Every once in a while in later years some one would come to me with a letter of introduction and say: "Mrs. Woodward, I have a wonderful idea for advertising. Thought you could tell me how to dispose of it."

"Yes?" I would say, hopelessness descending on me, for I knew that this was one more person who would go away discouraged. "Yes?"

"Well, you see, it's this——"

"Wait—wait," I said. "Don't tell me your idea. It may be one we already have." I knew from experience that if a year later we came out with something that might be old to us, but that resembled his conception in the least way, he would think we had stolen his thought. It was safest not to listen to ideas at all unless we were ready to pay for them on the spot.

"Oh, all right," would come in rather a disgruntled tone. "I suppose that's fair—fair enough. But it's so good, I thought you'd like to have it for some automobile advertiser."

"We have no automobile account."

"Well, then, maybe you'd sell my idea to an automobile manufacturer and pay me something for it."

"I'm sorry," I would have to say, "but ideas are of very little use to us. You don't get new accounts that way. If I should take the best idea in the world to the biggest automobile advertiser, it wouldn't get ten seconds' consideration unless that automobile advertiser wanted my idea and my help before I got there."

"But my idea is entirely original."

"If it is too new and original it will be even more unwelcome; it will be considered queer."

"But, my dear lady, don't you ever have any ideas in this business?"

"Yes, we have them all the time. But we take them only to people who expect them of us. And nearly all new ones must be toned down a little bit before either the advertiser or the general public likes them. You're an artist, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you familiar with German advertising art?"

"Yes, of course—it's the finest there is—the strongest."

"Well, I think so too," I said. "When I was in Germany several years ago I bought drawings which I thought good for some of my customers. They were beautiful, with a fine sales quality, and they were just as different as possible from the common run. I never succeeded in getting one of them used."

"But why not?" He was amazed. "Were they too expensive?"

"They were cheaper than anything we could get over here. They were just too new, too different. A slight hint from one of them worked out in the American manner often went over, but that was all that I could do. There are other advertising

agents who have had the same experience on this German art work."

"Then you think it's no use doing anything with my idea?"

"Unless you happened to be in an agency that was working for an automobile advertiser, and the need for a new idea came up—in that case you might be able to do something with yours, but you wouldn't get much for it.

"Here, I'll show you what ideas are worth," I told him. "I'll give you an idea right now for nothing, for advertising a beauty product. You can show it to anybody you like. It would really be best for a cold-cream advertiser. Here it is. Lots of well-known people have private little beauty secrets of their own. Some one told me that Miss Elsie de Wolfe, the famous decorator, has a clever scheme. After she removes cold cream she sprays her face with an atomizer filled with rose water and witch hazel, half and half. Good stuff! And new! Another woman (you'd know her name well if I told you) told me not long ago that she rubs glycerine on her elbows and knees every night to take away the roughness of summer outdoor living. A cold-cream advertiser could tie up each one of his advertisements with some such little trick as this used by some famous woman."

"But, Mrs. Woodward, why don't you sell it to one of the cold-cream advertisers?"

"Because, like most other big advertisers, they have a regular advertising agency and they take ideas from them. Don't you see—I would be just somebody coming in from outside with this little idea of mine?"

Advertisers are willing to spend extravagant sums to-day for illustrations. In 1922 a man came to see me with some drawings in color, done by a French artist in Paris, and suitable for perfume advertising.

"These are lovely. How much are they?" I asked.

"Eight hundred dollars apiece," he replied.

"That lets me out." I handed them back. "None of my customers would pay that much for a drawing. I have them badly trained."

"But," he argued, "I have just sold twelve of this same type to ——," naming a well-known cosmetics house in New York.

"I can't help that. I have to use cheaper drawings and more copy. Those people use ads that are all illustrations."

Later I saw these drawings in the advertising of that particular house. A few months afterward I went to Paris for an account of my own, and I had to have some drawings made on the spot.

I bought exactly the same kind of drawing from the same artist for forty dollars, and I did not haggle about the price. The artist probably got about forty dollars for each of his drawings and the difference between forty and eight hundred went to the middlemen who sold them.

Twenty years ago if you had told a client that you wanted him to spend eight hundred dollars for one advertising drawing you would have lost his account. In pity he might have had you examined by a lunacy commission. Now many a page advertisement is illustrated by drawings that cost from two to three thousand dollars. There are fashions in advertising artists. An advertiser often insists on having the work of some man who is at the moment appearing in two or three other high-priced advertisements. Thus weakening the effect of all of them.

In a sale of millions of sets of O. Henry, the copy which sold the most had a little hurried line drawing of a girl which cost ten dollars. Many of our O. Henry advertisements had drawings that cost more, but we never had one that sold more books. I like good illustrations as much as most people, but I think it bad business to depend on them at the expense of selling power. Take any issue of a magazine like the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *American Magazine*, the *Woman's Home*

Companion—turn over the pages. You may say, "Isn't that a stunning ad?" or, "What a pretty girl!" But try these two tests. As you look at the advertisement consider, "Does this fill me with a desire to go out to-day and buy this tooth paste or this cigarette—this anything?"

Or else—

Cover the names of all the advertisers, look at your favorite advertising illustrations, and see if you know what they're trying to sell.

People both in and out of the advertising business have said to me, "Aren't those Coles Phillips drawings the most beautiful advertisements you ever saw?"

"Coles Phillips drawings? What do they advertise?"

"Well, it's some brand of silverware."

"M-m. Which silverware?"

And the answer usually is, "I don't know."

All that I have said here is commonplace in the advertising business as theory, but is ignored in action. But it is never forgotten by mail-order advertisers or by agencies which specialize in selling goods by mail. In this sort of publicity you can do no guessing, you can take few chances. Every advertisement you print has a coupon or a key mark of some kind and the advertiser knows

exactly what he is getting back for each dollar spent. You will notice that those advertisers who sell their goods by mail almost never have elaborate illustrations, but on the other hand they do have most carefully worded advertising copy.

Both mail-order and department-store publicity, on which results can be quickly traced, are usually crowded with words in small type. This is unfashionable with other advertisers, because it is likely to look ugly. It does sell goods.

It is so easy to assume that a beautiful illustration will make a better advertisement, because people like to look at pretty pictures, but actual experience shows that while people may like to look at these illustrations they do not act on them, unless the picture is tied up inseparably with the product like an appetizing photograph of Del Monte Asparagus. Otherwise the consumer admires the picture but forgets to tie it to anything. No use showing a woman an exquisite drawing of a stocking—it might be any one of a dozen makes.

You remember the "Sunny Jim" advertising years ago—attractive, clever, witty. Do you recall what it advertised? So at the time everybody talked about Sunny Jim, but nobody connected him with *Force,* and only a few people bought

Force. Instead they bought dully advertised things like Quaker Oats.

Good advertising is not a work of art in itself; it has no value at all unless it makes people buy. Not its phrases or look must be remembered, but the product it is trying to sell.

Large pictures and small words are easier to prepare and more profitable than cheap pictures and much copy. It is the practice for the agency to make a commission on art work. On copywriting the agency not only does not make a commission, but is put to heavy expense for the salaries of its copywriters. It is also a temptation to even the best copywriter to make his job a little easier by more emphasis on illustration and less on the words he has to write. Like all those who love to write, he has to be driven to this beloved task.

In spite of all this, it isn't by any means always the fault of the agency that showy advertising is so popular; often it is the advertiser himself who insists that the copy be sacrificed to illustration. He likes to see these beautiful pages spread out with his name in magazines of large circulation. You might think this sort of vanity impossible; that he would rather sell his goods. You would be much mistaken. The advertiser thinks he would rather sell his goods, of course; but he prefers to

believe that showy, loud representation will do better than a homelier, more modest manner. It is an old trick in dealing with a certain kind of client to put a picture of the head of his firm in your copy suggestions, even if somehow or other you later manage to suppress it in the actual advertisements.

You would think also that an advertiser would feel that an agency, having struggled with advertising in one form and another for years, might know more about it than he does. Occasionally, sitting in an advertising conference, I have had a client say:

"Now you people know all about this advertising business and I don't know a thing, so I'm going to let you do it your way. All I want to do is to make a suggestion once in a while."

A secret look of alarm would pass from one to another of us. The remark had impressed us as a bad sign. The advertiser who says that will never let you alone. He will insist on tearing up every piece of copy you write, on ruining your illustrations, wrecking your plan of campaign. One part of his statement, however, is thoroughly honest—he doesn't know anything at all about the advertising business.

Now that I am just a consumer and no longer in the advertising business, I am glad to see all

these lively pictures. There are few magazines editorially as interesting as the illustrations in their advertisements. I am also pleased that these beautiful pictures do not make me go out and spend money.

CHAPTER XXVI

Melodrama

I AM more interested in what makes people do things than in what they actually do. In this distorted world people, on the inside, are usually very different from what they seem on the outside. They are nearly always both better and worse than they appear to be. Their actions are only faint shadows of the vivid reality within—lame expressions of a furious vitality, forcing its way through flesh and circumstance.

So offices—neat and square—are one thing; but the life in them is turbulent with foolishness, confusion, and beauty.

The very word "office" is cold and tight. "Business"—what an ugly, stiff word it is! Or perhaps merely ugly and stiff because of what we have tied around it in our minds—perhaps it is a pretty word. There was a Frenchman who did not know any English who thought "cellardoor" the loveliest word in our language.

Anyway, offices and business are really neither cold nor stiff.

When you first go to work in an office, you are

faced by a group of masks, faces which say little—for we are carefully trained in America, we Jews and Italians and Russians, as well as Anglo-Saxons, to hide all feeling. Is that one reason, perhaps, why Americans love France and Italy—because there the faces are alive and the eyes tell stories, while at home we seem always busy trying to hide rather than to speak? Or why Russia gives more to art than America, because Russians are always expressing emotion, while in America half of even the creative artist's energy goes into hiding what he feels?

In an American office the hiding is greater than anywhere else, because most business people themselves believe that business is a place in which to function only as a job-holder, not as a person. So it takes a little while before you learn what is going on behind the masks. The minor clerks gossip freely, and they usually know a great deal about the people in the place. The heads of offices rarely know; the little employees are afraid to tell them. Perhaps because I am a woman the young people sometimes brought me their gossip. The talk in itself was not often revealing; but it opened a window on the passionate undercurrents.

There was the telephone girl in one office, who handled her switchboard, her husband, and her

lovers all with good nature and efficiency. She died because a man threw her over—of heart-break, I suppose it could be called. The fat sweetish woman of fifty who was dying by inches because her lover for thirty years had left her; the stenographer, a sensitive child of twenty, who ran away with her morose, bullying boss; the quiet stenographer who turned out to be, under another name, the center of a flaring newspaper scandal; the one who threw up her job because her boss did not admire her baby; the woman who told us that if the job went well she was going to get a divorce from her husband, but he didn't know it yet; the man who used to do exquisite crocheting and embroidery; the mean trickster who left his money-hunt once a week to make children's toys for fun in the country.

A sharp-nosed girl sat at a cold flat desk in our office, pretending to be dead—to be only a clerk. A thin bit of a thing,—as though life and hope had been squeezed from her. One day a scandal exploded. She had been taking bribes from a company which sold us goods. The sensation flashed across our daily doings like a comet. "Did you hear?"—"How awful!"—"What did she do with the money?"—"I don't know."—"They're shut off in the big conference room."—"If you find out, tell me."—"Lord, the poor thing!"—

"She looks starved and never a decent suit or hat."—"Gets fifty dollars a week at that!"

Meantime in the conference room she was weeping wildly. To me, looking at that wasted face, her confession seemed grotesque. For the first time I noticed that her little red eyes were round and childish. She had given the money to a man. But she had not been dead, after all. It is better to be alive in hell than dead in heaven.

Bribery is much less common in the advertising business than in others with equal opportunities.

There are different kinds of honesty in the business world. Standards vary, but are clearly understood within the limits of each trade. You know that the object of stockbrokers in Wall Street is to make all the money they can, whether at your expense or not, and that you have a very good chance of coming out of that neighborhood with nothing but a crust and a shirt. Nevertheless, the stock exchange takes orders and cancellations over the telephone and does nearly all its business by word of mouth, everyone depending on the rigid honesty of everyone else.

And so with advertising. I have taken orders for hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth over the telephone from clients who did not hesitate to make the wildest claims in their copy to the public. A man who objects to telling white lies will

sometimes cheerfully doctor a financial statement to a bank. A director who would not deceive his wife will tell any shifty lie to keep from raising men's wages or to increase the dividends of his company. The statesman or politician is not expected to be honest about certain things; neither is the business man. Honesty is a trade term. In business, honesty generally means sticking to the rules of the trade. The brand of honesty that is outside your particular trade means nothing to you.

"God, what a fool!" they said about the girl who took the bribes. There were those who laughed because they were afraid of life. And the girl and her melodrama disappeared.

Life can dare to be melodramatic; fiction can't. Life doesn't care whether you think it is plausible or not; indeed it rarely is plausible.

I remember an occasion when something—monotony and repressions, probably—suddenly pushed one man into a melodrama as queer as those that used to be played at the Third Avenue Theatre.

His blue eyes were like hard balls. They are just as far apart as they had been when he was a boy, but they seemed, without any real physical difference, to turn in; he looked morally cross-eyed. It was as though the money-making into

which all his vitality had poured had actually pulled them closer together.

His attitude toward the women in the office was pleasant, quite sexless. One night he and a girl happened each of them to stay late at work. At ten o'clock she began to feel tired, and she looked wearily from her little room out on the oblong rows of flat shining desks—so empty—so much emptier than if there had been nothing at all in the brightly lighted outer office. Their shining glass tops called aloud for some disorder—a few papers—anything restless.

"My goodness! how quiet it is!" she thought. "I'll say good night to Mr. Roberts just to hear my own voice."

And she drifted into the man's office. They had been friendly at their work.

"Don't you ever call it a day, Mr. Roberts?" she remarked. "I'm dead tired, and I think I'll go home." I am repeating her own words—she told me later about it.

"I'll call it a day," he answered, "right this minute. I tell you what—let's go somewhere and dance and get all this fog out of our brains."

"Just you and me?" She was a little surprised.

"Yes—why not? Look here . . . you're not blind . . . You must know I'm kind of crazy about

you. Don't you think you and I could have—well-er-some fun together?"

She was even more surprised . . . then suddenly it seemed funny to her.

"Don't be an idiot," she smiled. "I didn't know you kept any liquor hidden away here."

"No, I don't. I mean it. I'm serious."

"And your wife?"

"She wouldn't know anything about it," he insisted.

"Thanks for the compliment, but I'm not playing. Good night."

She went back to her office to get her hat. "Well, it wasn't much trouble to settle that nonsense. To-morrow I'll have to act as though he'd never made a break." Melodrama was far from her mind.

Suddenly he walked into her office, slammed the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He turned on her, stunned to silence in her chair.

"Now"—he was almost savage—"now we're going to stay right here until you'll say you'll have me."

"You're insane." For a moment she was frightened. "I'll scream."

"No, you won't scream, because it will be worse for you than for me if you start a scandal like that."

"No," she repeated, "I won't scream. I'm sure you'll have more sense in about a minute."

"Don't take it that way. Don't. I'm sorry I've been rough or brutal," He left his theatrical pose at the door—he dropped on his knees—he threw his arms around her waist.

"For God's sake, listen to me," he went on—and his voice grew thick. "I can't go on living the way I am—work and making money—work and money. You drive me mad here all day. You've got to. Anyway"—he was fierce again—"this door stays locked till you do."

"Look here"—she had got her breath—"do you mean that you love me?"

"Love—love—what's love? I don't know. Maybe I do. I want you. And what harm will it do you? Don't tell me you've got moral scruples. You know better. Why not? Why not?"

She sat and looked at him for a moment, dazed. And then she laughed. "*I'm* perfectly comfortable. I'll sit in this office all night if that's the way you feel about it."

"But," he began, still on his knees, "I want you."

Unfortunately for the tense drama of that moment, she didn't want him. "You look awfully funny crawling around on your knees," she said.

He got up, shamed and flustered, unlocked the door, and walked out. He never spoke of this explosion, although they worked together for years afterward. Next day he appeared to her as the same cold, sexually indifferent, calculating man that he had seemed before the episode.

The suppressions of years had risen in one frenzied rebellion; but, well trained, they sank back into their hiding places under the cool touch of a little ridicule.

Repression played a different trick on the vice-president of another office. On a Monday morning when I came to work stenographers and clerks came piling into my office. They all talked at once.

"What is it in the name of Heaven?" I managed to get in a question.

"It was a fight. He knocked the chief down. There was blood on the carpet."

"He? Who?" I got the story straight at last. In our beautiful blue-curtained office the president, known to all the advertising world as Harry, and the vice-president had had a rough-and-tumble fight.

The vice-president, dissatisfied with much in the organization, had been secretly forming an advertising agency of his own. His dissatisfaction was justified, and it is common enough for

executives secretly to make such arrangements. It is not supposed to be ethical, but it's done and it is unavoidable. Harry had found out, that preceding Saturday, about the vice-president's plans.

Now Harry was an outspoken person of lively emotions, while the vice-president was the kind of man who is proud of his self-control. He had always tried to turn off into channels of athletic exercise some of his high-strung passionate temper. When he was angry, he would smile sweetly —and on that disorderly Saturday these furiously sweet smiles turned and played him a shabby trick.

"How did it happen, Harry?" I asked.

"I told him he was a rotter, and you know he is. I've been too good to him—taught him the business; and now he snoops around and takes a lot of business away with him. Do you know he's even got his office rented? I'll suppose he'll take Somers and Joe Long. Hope he does—good riddance. I'll be glad to see the last of all of them."

"But ——?" I started to ask a surprised question.

"Well, I've been figuring it out since Saturday and I think we'll make more money without their business, and them too. . . . Costs too much to handle."

The office boys enjoyed several days of intense excitement. I heard one talking to a visitor:

"Big guy like that hitting a little man like the chief. Say, ain't it against the law to hit a man with glasses? My brother says you can send a man to jail for that." This delusion about the illegality of hitting a man with glasses is a common one.

The vice-president was very miserable when I saw him. "Did you hear what kind of a damned fool I made of myself? But he called me a thief and a crook. . . . I got so mad. . . . I suppose I should have been cool and remembered he was smaller, but ——"

"It's likely to do you a lot of harm, this story —you know that, don't you?" I asked him.

"Oh, I know that, all right. He'll tell it to everybody in the advertising business. I haven't lost my temper in years—and now it's jumped out like a crazy animal."

And I said to him with my best advisory manner: "Why don't you get mad and swear and curse about once a week? What's the matter with having a temper? It's one of the best things I know about you."

"No," he answered, "I think you're all wrong. If there's one thing I've learned from this, it is never to get mad again as long as I live."

And the man's artificial will clamped down once more on the restless volcano of his nature.

When I saw him several years later he looked colder and harder, and in better physical condition than ever. In childhood he had been taught the value of self-control too well. Too well the idea that all was pleasant, and if it was not pleasant it must seem so.

I suppose it is because so many people think offices inhuman efficiency incubators that they are always laying down rules about how women in them should act and what they should wear and how they should have long sleeves and not bob their hair and do without rouge. I cannot in any other way explain to myself this impertinent interference with the lives of office women. Why should anyone take it upon himself to give advice about such a matter? A girl who is able to earn her own living can be trusted to have enough sense to know what she ought to wear. And if she hasn't it's her own affair—nobody else's.

Girls in New York one summer came to work in dresses that stopped just below the knee and had no sleeves.

"It isn't dignified or in good taste," one of the editors of *Vogue* said to me. "I don't like the idea of little thin, light dresses in an office."

"You think I oughtn't to wear that white dotted swiss dress to my office, don't you?" I knew that she was trying tactfully to advise me.

"Yes, that's what I mean, Helen. That dress has sleeves and all that—but the material isn't suitable."

"Why not?" I remarked.

"It's not correct. An office is an office," was her rather unsatisfactory reply.

"You think it's all right for a girl at Southampton or Newport to wear a thin dress with or without sleeves, don't you?"

"Oh yes," she admitted.

"Well," I said, a little excitedly, "that girl has nothing in the world to do except to keep cool. Now these girls in my office have a lot to do besides keeping cool. They have every reason for keeping fresh and rested all day long if they can. They're the ones who ought to wear the cool dresses in the summer, more than the girl in Southampton."

I had a stenographer whose dresses were a little too low-cut in the neck and whose sleeves were entirely absent. A man said to me one day, "Don't you think you ought to tell her not to wear that kind of thing here?"

"Why?" I replied. "She looks pretty in that dress and she's happy in it. You think I ought to tell her to put on something she likes less?"

"I don't think it's good taste for the office."

"What do you mean by good taste?"

"Well, it doesn't seem to fit in. And you know a lot of men get kind of upset by it."

"That's the men's business not hers nor mine."

These people seem to expect women who work to become suddenly inhuman. The long day is the best time most girls have to look pretty. Then why shouldn't they look just as seductive and dangerous to men as they know how, during these important hours? If they should not do it at their work, then no woman should do it at any time. I don't see why it is more immoral for a girl to wear a sleeveless dress and a well-made-up face at a typewriting desk than for other women to wear them at an evening dinner.

By dressing up either in clothes or in cosmetics we women build a guard about ourselves. "*Se parer*" meant originally to guard, to defend one's self. Now it has come to mean to adorn one's self. We are armed for a fight, which still remains harder for working-women than for women of leisure.

CHAPTER XXVII

Toy Balloons

IN "A Storyteller's Story" Sherwood Anderson shows that he had all his life a definite objective—something he was working toward from beginning to end. It was not always clear in his mind, but it was clear in what we might call his soul, or his subconsciousness.

For a long time it seemed to me that this sort of definite objective was absent from my own life. I was always just about to have a plan, but never got to it. I was pushed into a certain type of education, pushed into working for a living, pushed into the advertising business. The twenty years of work seemed without plan—a thing of accident—and in that no different from the lives of most other people.

But I did think that I had one fixed goal—security. I thought that I was seeking safety and peace—peace from fighting, security from money troubles. Now that I can look back I realize that I was doing nothing of the sort. While my mind was bent on that conscious goal something deeper kept turning me from it, so that in spite of my-

self I ran away from safety. The moment everything in a job looked secure I left that job. The *Woman's Home Companion* was too safe a place for me. The moment in any business contact I saw peace and safety I broke that contact.

I had thought that the thing to work for was safety, the thing to aim at was security; the goal of life was peace. And all the time the love of fighting, of chance, of change, pushed me away from these little closed rooms.

When at last I left the advertising business, the office prophesied that I would be back in six months. I gave many good and plausible reasons for stopping. I was tired. I wanted to do something more "worth while." I wanted leisure. But none of these was real, though I did not know it then. The truth was that I had reached a place where business presented a smooth road, and that road was not inviting.

Up to a certain time in my work, while it was uncertain and the future dark, I was somehow—it is hard to make clear—living inside the work. I was in a little cabin and the work was around—full of terrors in the dark, of flashes of light and of possible adventures. I could at times put into it everything I had in my mind and spirit. First I lived for weeks, then only for days, and then hardly for minutes, inside the work. And after

awhile it was no longer a dark cloud shot with light about me. It was a path running agreeably and pleasantly, a little winding, perhaps, but most comfortable. And I knew that I was no longer inside my work, but outside it. Instead of looking up to it and feeling it all around me, I was standing aside and looking down at it. This change was not sudden; it came bit by bit and slowly. The work became duller and duller and easier and easier, until it became impossible.

In a sensible world one would immediately leave such detached work and get inside a new absorbing activity. But it is our habit to consider such changes erratic and queer, when in truth they might be life-giving both for the individual and for society.

There are people who all their lives live inside one little activity, but there are more who get outside, look at it contemptuously, and yet busy their hearts and minds and hands with it as long as they live. Wasteful! A social waste that people should turn their power into work which they feel is ridiculous; that they should spend their days building on concepts at which they laugh—at which they have to laugh to keep their self-respect.

Once in a while a man is fortunate. Before he has reached the point at which he cannot bear what

he is doing, he is able to turn over his business to subordinates and go off and play at something else without worrying about money. To most this is impossible. Rebellion comes too soon. Sometimes a man dares to leave one activity for another—dares the risk of being called "unsafe." But that sort of courage is rare. Maybe I shouldn't call it courage, maybe it is rather something learned in childhood—the habit of dropping instantly anything that hurts.

In the advertising business there are more restless people than in others. Advertising is hard work. There is little drudgery, but always the need for something new—a new idea, a new plan, a new piece of copy, a new drawing—dragged out of a pestered and reluctant imagination. The copywriter has good reason to be jaded at forty. And the salesmen for advertising agencies who are responsible for their own copy feel that they are being battered. They have on one side the temperaments and demands of their clients; on the other the shortcomings of their agencies. These, being fallible, cannot always be bubbling with ideas and cannot always in an hour and a half turn out perfect work that ought to take a month.

Forty is naturally a critical age with advertising men and women. Many of them change then abruptly into something different. One man

dropped out of sight on a peach farm in Georgia. One began to drink heavily. Another became obsessed with women. One adopted five children. One wrote a big Broadway play. Most of them, though, just get golf sickness.

In a famous agency—where I never worked—there was a conference among the executives. One of them, younger than the others, jumped awkwardly to his feet.

"Going to make a speech, Joe?" said the broad-shouldered and good-natured president.

"Speech? Good heavens. No! I've been making speeches all week to hat retailers. No, it's just that I've got to say something and I'll feel better looking down on you."

"All right, kid—go ahead."

"Look here, you fellows. . . . I'm a lot younger than you and I don't like to say what I'm going to say—you'll think I've got a lot of nerve. . . ."

"Oh, shoot!" called somebody from the end of the table.

"Well, all right. If you ask for it here it is," blurted out the young man. "This agency is sliding down, don't you know it? We haven't had a new account in a year."

"Well, suppose we haven't," drawled the fat

man next to him. "Look at the profit we made last year."

"Yes, but we won't keep on doing it. You know as well as I do that agencies have got to get new business all the time. We're bound to lose accounts, or one of our clients will go broke. I'll bet you right now that the P. D. Company next year has such a lot of sales that it'll want to stop advertising. And suppose we strike a panic!"

The president stopped drawing little heads on a piece of paper. "All right, Joe—then what do you suggest? We know all that. What's the big little idea?"

"Well, it's damned hard for me to say it. I haven't been through as long a grind as you people, and I've got no money in this business except the stock I earned—you've all got more in it than I have. But the fact is—well—you fellows play too much golf and go to Palm Beach too much. Gee! you were in Europe four months this last year—you yourself, chief. And you're never in the office more than three or four days in the summer, any of you. I know you built this thing up and all, but it's not going to stay built up."

The group of men looked rather sheepish. One spoke up: "Well, I was sick most of last year."

"Yes, I know you were, and it's a shame ——"

The president of the company broke in. "You're

perfectly right, Joe. We've got to pay more attention to this business. Thank you, kid. . . . Say, Frank, if we don't go this minute we're not going to play any eighteen holes this afternoon. . . . Joe, I'll be thinking this over and next week we'll have another talk about it. All of you think it over, will you? It's just as serious as he says it is. So long!"

I know there is a man in the X Agency who works eighteen hours a day and one in the B. Company who is childishly happy. No business could last if most of its members felt continual dissatisfaction. There are advertising people who nearly have a single purpose. There are those who carry into later life adolescent ideas picked up at college. With many there is peace or at least refuge in the thing at hand, in responsibility or in details, or in persuading some one else to do something. And people are often happy in a new job. There may even be business men who are happy in work after it has lost its novelty. I've heard of some, but I have met only one. And he was a little mad.

Many vice-presidents and officials are in reality nothing but clerks, but they are happy with small salaries because they think that they cannot be replaced and because they can sign *Vice-President* after their names. And the soldier dies gladly

when he sees himself saving his country . . . and the wardrobe woman thinks that she makes the actress, and is happy in her responsibility . . . and the elevator starter knows just how to keep all his elevators going with regularity, otherwise what a calamity to the people in the building!

My husband once had a lackadaisical, gangling clerk around his office who seemed to be no good for anything—certainly not for the abstruse calculations of finance—and who was paid only seventy dollars a month. This clerk quit his job one day, saying that he was going into some other business.

About four years later my husband met him by chance on a subway train, and the former timid clerk had become buoyant, confident, hearty, and full of conversation. Marvelous change. What do you suppose had happened to him? He had become a goldfish expert. Yes, a goldfish expert. W. came home bursting with the news. He had met a goldfish expert!

The goldfish expert had a printed card. We have it still, among the curiosities. On it is his name and address, and then it says: "Aquaria. . . . Terraria. . . . Aquavivaria." He sells the little aquariums that one sees in homes.

The expert said that he was rushed with business; that he had just been called to see what was

the matter with the goldfish on John D. Rockefeller's estate, and the steward had told him that he was the only man in America who was really equipped with the knowledge necessary in such a crisis.

"There wasn't much the matter with them," he said. "The secret of health in goldfish is water and diet, so often disregarded."

He told W. about the various kinds of goldfish; and he said that he had a very good trade in turtles, too—the little ornamental kind. Also small live alligators, which he obtained in Florida.

"How about frogs?" my husband asked. "Is there much doing in that line?"

"We-ell, not much," the young man replied, gravely. "You see, frogs are not lively enough to be interesting—but now and then I get an order for them."

This young man had been crushed by his insignificance in a large business house, but he had made an important place for himself in the goldfish trade, and this had given him confidence and vitality. That feeling of importance, whether admirable or not, is what keeps people alive.

In the advertising business we thought ourselves important. Our little worlds were definite. We

thought we knew what we were doing; we had our plans for next week or next year.

The realization came to me with a slow shock that I was nothing, we were nothing. We were feathers all of us, blown about by winds which we neither understood nor controlled. When I was young I thought that intelligence mattered most of all, that with clear sight and logic my life would be better planned than the lives about me. It was terrifying to discover that intelligence hardly matters; that it whirls like chaff before the winds of life and that we are swept and blown about and helpless. And if we see clearly we are only a little more unfortunate. The intelligent plan of life for which I had been waiting for twenty years never materialized. And I made up my mind that I was going to do one thing of my own volition—I was going to leave the advertising business.

I am glad of those twenty years. I would not give up their blazing complex life. The diplomacy, the pulling of wires, the manipulating of people, the exasperations and hysteria, all these are growing less in my mind. But the wondering about motives and secrets of action will keep me busy for a long time.

This was no play that I was in, no game; it was living. The people about me were living. If

we evolved a theory, it was likely to be smashed on the head the next day. Keyed coupons, balance sheets, sales figures, said checkmate to flights of fancy. Death and jealousy and even laughter sometimes recklessly put these balance sheets in their proper places. It was good to be able to live in the harsh white noon of our modern day . . . the advertising business in the United States.

Sometimes in preparing to leave I thought that what I wanted was to go off somewhere in a little cottage, to do housework and plant a garden. Then I thought that Paradise would be in just lying in a long chair and looking over hills that did not move. Even the ocean seemed too restless. But under all this I knew that soon something else would be pushing me on. I thought I would write, and yet I did not see why I should. I thought I would get into some public movement —and this seemed futile. So at last I made up my mind just to stop and drift. That would be enough. I was mistaken.

"I dreamed of love and quietness,
A cabin hearth and orchard land.
I woke to life . . . and life had thrust
A sword within my hand."

THE END

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